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A J. Manning

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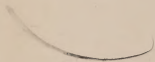


aged lady

a very tired gent"

PM

a present for Mr. Bird





Photograph by C. Mardon, Esq.
A curious malformed head. (See chapter iii., p. 38.)

THE
RED DEER of EXMOOR

WITH NOTES ON THOSE WHO HUNTED THEM,

FROM

ROBERT D'AUBERVILLE, 1070,

TO

ROBERT ARTHUR SANDERS, 1906.

BY

ARCHIBALD HAMILTON.

("CINQFOIL.")

LONDON:

HORACE COX,

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PROLOGUE.

"FURTHERMORE, I will prove by sundry reasons in this little prologue that there is no man's life that useth gentle game and disport less displeasable unto God than the life of a perfect and skilful hunter, or from which more good cometh.

"The first reason is that hunting causeth a man to eschew the seven deadly sins.

"Secondly, men are better when riding, more just and more understanding, and more alert and more at ease, and more undertaking and better knowing of all countries and passages, and short and long all good customs and manners cometh thereof, and health of man and of his soul. For who so fleeth the seven deadly sins as we believe, he shall be saved, therefore a good hunter shall be saved."

GASTON DE FOIX.

I take this opportunity of expressing my grateful thanks to Lord Fortescue, Mr. Michael Temple, and other friends for the invaluable help they have given in placing this work before the public.

E. C. H.

The Illustrations in this work, if not otherwise acknowledged, are by Mr. H. M. Lomas.

PREFACE.

TO WRITE a Preface for the book of a friend is not always easy, and when the friend has been taken away by untimely death, the task becomes melancholy as well as difficult, for the pages of the proof sheets continually remind one of days and of incidents and of deductions drawn from them which one would like to talk over if it were but possible.

Yet are regrets lightened if the work is one calculated to keep alive the remembrance of the writer, and that may fairly be predicted of this little volume on the Red Deer of Exmoor. So much has been written of recent years about the Wild Stag Hunting of the West Country that it might be thought there was hardly room for another book, but Mr. Hamilton has made a fascinating addition to the literature on the subject, and has turned to good account all the knowledge he had acquired of the sport and of the country.

In some respects he had exceptional qualifications. Born in 1855 below the Cotswold Hills he was early entered to hunting in the country where Shakespeare

—*teste*, "The Diary of Master William Silence"—learned his woodcraft; and he was schooled to think over and reflect on the incidents of each day's sport and the line of each run by a wise father—then Curate of Chipping Campden—who always made him on his return give an account of the day's doings and of the hound work.

Bradfield and Cambridge followed, not without distinction; then he read for the Bar; but politics, and sport when within his reach, had greater attractions for him. As a boy of sixteen he was helping the Conservative candidate at Bristol, and on three or four occasions he acted as Election Agent in constituencies when there was a hard fight, his keenness and energy and skill contributing not a little to the successful result in each case, and winning for him nomination to the Political Committee of the Constitutional Club.

His first visit to the Exmoor country was nearly thirty years ago when he went to Porlock in charge of a pupil with whom he hunted strenuously on foot. A little later he became correspondent of the *Field*, a post he held for over twenty years, writing with no little literary skill, and giving accounts of the day's doings which were remarkable for their insight and accuracy and for their appreciation of the circumstances which had helped toward good sport on one day and made failure all but inevitable on another.

Almost the only break in his career as

correspondent was caused by the South African war. In 1900, being then Lord Dunraven's secretary, he helped to raise the Sharpshooters I.Y., and embarked with the regiment as Quartermaster.

This was work after his own heart, for he had desired as a lad to join the Army, and had only refrained, being the sole surviving son, in deference to his mother's wishes ; and though on the march up from Beira he met with a serious accident, it did not prevent his earning in subsequent months the title of "Fighting Hamilton."

Not long after his return to England he began the pages which follow. Especially interesting are those in which he opens comparatively new ground and describes the face of the country in ancient and modern days ; the circumstances of the inhabitants at various periods ; and, turning to account the knowledge gained in Mr. Inskip's chambers, the effect of the Forest Laws, and of the family quarrels and lawsuits of the dwellers round the Moor.

There is much on all these points that will attract all those who care to know the conditions under which their forefathers lived ; and the comparison of the pace and characteristics of the old and the present hounds will be acknowledged to be eminently sane and judicious.

But it all adds to one's regrets. The injury received in South Africa prevented Hamilton seeing as much of the sport as usual last year, but it did not keep him out of the saddle, and there were very

few who were prepared for the news that came at Christmas of his end.

Like many another whose name does not appear in the casualty lists, he had died of the campaign to which he went in his country's service. He will be remembered for many a day in the stag-hunting country as a good sportsman and a good friend, and not least kindly by his Withypool neighbours, the descendants of the old Free Suitors whose traditions he has preserved.

FORTESCUE.

Exmoor,

July, 1907.

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"England after the Black Death."—Gasquet.
"Lives of the Queens of England."—Miss Strickland.

ERRATA.

- Page 2, line 16. For *John* read Charles.
- " 37, " 4. For *spead* read spread.
- " 37, " 20. For *St. Andries* read St. Audries.
- " 38, " 1. For *St. Andries* read St. Audries.
- " 39, " 14. For *Oct. 11th* read Oct. 6th.
- " 39, " 24. For *seventeen* read fifteen.
- " 40, lines 9-15. Add footnote quoted from *The Field*,
Nov. 1, 1902.
- " 45, line 22. For *above* read on page 39.
- " 59, " 22. For *an* read on.
- " 74, " 26. For *warren* read Warren.
- " 106, " 30. For *St. Andries* read St. Audries.
- " 111, " 27. For *altogether* read all together.
- " 161, " 2. Inverted commas after Holy Trinity.
- " 172, " 29. For *areas* read eras.
- " 184, " 5. For *Windsor* read Winsford.
- " 223, " 30. For *notes* read motes.
- " 225, " 20. For *note* read mote.
- " 248, " 2. For *Louise* read Louis.
- " 306, " 11. For *Oxford* read Exford.
- " 350, " 4. For *work* read word.

THE RED DEER OF EXMOOR.



CHAPTER I.

THE HOME OF THE WILD RED DEER.

About me round I saw
Hill, dale, and shady woods, and sunny plains,
And liquid lapse of murmuring streams.—MILTON.

THE first view of the home of the wild red deer which a visitor to the West Country obtains is from the Great Western express, as it whirls him across the wide expanse of level grass land lying between Weston-super-Mare and Bridgwater. Far away across the shining waters of Bridgwater Bay, Dunkery Beacon towers high above the bold line of hills which bounds the horizon, while in the near foreground the wooded slopes of the Quantocks rise sharply from the highly cultivated plain. These hills and the thickly-wooded combes which seam their rough, and in many places precipitous, sides are the last stronghold in England of the wild red deer.

When increased enclosure, more advanced agriculture, and a prejudice easily to be understood against the depredations of a large and mischievous animal caused the destruction of the noble beast over almost the whole of England, it was in the wild country of

North Devon and West Somerset that the deer found sanctuary ; and the reason why here, and here only, they were safe may fairly be said to have been because here, and here only, the great merit of the red deer as a beast of venery was duly recognised and appreciated by the people. Laws might exist, and might be enforced with never so much vigour, but the deer would have perished had it not been that the whole country loved the sport of staghunting. How absolutely the existence of the deer depended on their being hunted is clearly shown from the fact that when, in the early part of the last century, staghunting was at a low ebb, deer poaching was rife ; but with the revival of staghunting poaching has almost disappeared. What a deep debt of gratitude the country owes to Mr. John Palk Collyns, Mr. Froude Bellew, and a few others who kept the staghounds going through the times of trouble, and thus preserved the herd from extinction, is fully appreciated by a grateful countryside, and their memories are honoured when the old toast of " Prosperity to Staghunting " is drunk. The ancient Royal Forest of Exmoor is the true centre of staghunting, and the history of the forest, the history of the deer, and the history of staghunting are indissolubly bound up together.

As the train rolls westward from Bridgwater we cross a muddy and singularly uninteresting tidal river, the Parret, and enter the red deer country. Uninteresting as the Parret is at first sight, it is

worthy of notice for three things. First, it forms the eastern boundary of the red deer country; secondly, it forms the boundary between two races and two dialects, for the Somersoetas never extended west of the river and the great marshes which it drains, while the Damnones, the men of Devon, were also kept back by the same impassable tract of country; thirdly, it is one of the few rivers in the world up which the water rushes with a distinct head or "bore" at every tide. It is a most curious sight as seen just below Bridgwater. The river bed is empty, the mud alone visible—that mud which when baked becomes Bath brick, and is sent all over the world, adding no little to the prosperity of Bridgwater. The boats and barges, all having a curious fan-like bow and stern, lie on the mud. Suddenly one hears a faint, rushing sound, and instantly every bargee is alert, boat-hook in hand. Round the bend one can see advancing a little brown ripple of water some few inches in height, closely followed by a bigger wave with a crest to it, varying in height from a foot to three feet or more, exactly like a sea wave about to break on the beach. But it never breaks—it rushes on at a pace varying from three to seven miles an hour, followed by a mass of water sloping steeply up from behind the crest of the wave. Ere the wave has passed a hundred yards the river, which a moment ago was empty, is half full of tidal water, and the boats and barges are rushing, jostling, and bumping their way under Bridgwater Bridge on a strong

current, which will carry them on half-way to Langport.

As the Parret forms the eastern boundary of the red deer country, so the Taw may fairly be said to form its western limit : a very different kind of river, for while the first meanders across broad level plains, kept in its uninteresting course by carefully constructed river banks, the latter rushes down from the hills of Devon a clear sparkling stream, tumbling over rocks, and dancing merrily on its way between wooded hills and fertile meadows till joining with the even more impetuous Torridge. The two together form the Bideford River, dear to lovers of Kingsley, and so reach the sea. The Bristol Channel, of course, bounds the country on the north.

The southern boundary is hard to define, for the deer have strayed far to the south, and outlying deer have been seen on the hills south of Wellington, on Dartmoor, and as far south as Totnes.

Probably a line drawn from a little below Tiverton Junction by Crediton to the Taw below Eggesford would enclose all the country in which deer habitually lie—roughly speaking, an area of fifty miles by forty.

It is with the northern half of this wild, beautiful region of hills and valleys, rough, heathery moors, and clear, dashing streams, that we have most to do, for there, on the highest plateau above the sea, lies what was once the Royal Forest of Exmoor—a small area compared with that of the surrounding wastes,

but the true home of the deer, and the cream of the country to ride over.

There are in the northern half of the country three main ranges of hills, two running north and south, the Quantock Hills and the Brendon Hills, and the third, the main ridge of Exmoor, running from Dunkery on the east to Chapman's Barrows on the west.

The Quantock Hills are a narrow range beginning near the sea and running at an average elevation of rather over a thousand feet for about ten miles inland, when they begin to widen out and fall away, little by little, into the vale of Taunton. They contain some of the wildest and most beautiful scenery to be found in England.

The hills rise abruptly from the valleys on each side, so that one may pass in a few hundred yards from some of the richest, most scientifically-cultivated land in Somerset on to a wild expanse of golden gorse and purple heather, or lose oneself in a seemingly endless mass of scrub oak and rhododendron. The hillsides are scored with precipitous combes, down each of which a tiny stream dashes and tumbles on its way to join the bigger waters in the vale below, the combes on the western side being mostly small and devoid of covert, while the longer, deeper combes on the eastern slope contain thousands of acres of the densest woods to be found anywhere in the West. Here the red deer lie in peace, and issue forth by night to plunder the crops in the fertile

lands below, or to seek change of scene and food by resting awhile in such distant coverts as Brymore, Swang Gorse, or Wick Park. Though their home is in the hills, they know the way over the vale, and many a merry chase they have led Mr. E. A. V. Stanley and his gallant pack, for when once the leaves have fallen the country is rideable, and though the banks are formidable, and, when the low ground is reached, the rhines are wide and deep, there is little or no wire. West of the Quantocks the vale is more impracticable, the banks are bigger, and the fields are smaller.

Along this valley runs the railway from Taunton to Minehead, the branch by which most visitors travel who intend to hunt with the Devon and Somerset Staghounds.

Passing westwards across this valley we slowly ascend the slope of the Brendon Hills. Whether the Brendon Hills should be said to run north and south or east and west is open to doubt; they are in reality a large table-land, much intersected with valleys, extending some twelve miles from Haddon, mighty stronghold of the deer, in the south to Croydon Hill and Dunster Park in the north. This length is greater than that from east to west, but the backbone seems to run from Elworthy by Raleigh's Cross along the line of the Cutcombe Road. At all events, all the streams south of this line find their way into the Tone, a tributary of the Parret, or into the Quarme and thence to the Exe

and the English Channel, while all the water north of the road finds its way direct by various brooks to the Bristol Channel.

Midway across these hills are the ruins of the engine-houses put up years ago by the Ebbw Vale Iron Company for the purpose of their mines there. The working of these mines gave a great stimulus to the villages round, and, happening at a time when corn, and particularly oats, commanded a high price, led to a vast area of rough heather land being enclosed and partially turned to cultivation. There are miles of what are called "rough enclosures" on the Brendon Hills, saving trouble, no doubt, to the shepherds, but for arable purposes utterly useless, and, save for the rough banks with or without beech hedges on top, hardly distinguishable from open moorland.

The coverts in the deep valleys, particularly at Haddon and Slowley and round Chargot Lodge, are favourite haunts of the deer, and many a good run has been enjoyed over Brendon Hill of late years, after a long period when that good stretch of country was, owing no doubt to the then recent enclosures, the mining, and the attendant railway, forsaken by the deer. Now that the mines are deserted and the railway is grass grown, the red deer once more roam at will over the wild plateau.

Dipping down towards the north-west one finds oneself on a narrow ridge with deep valleys on either hand, and, after pausing awhile to refresh both man

and beast at the "Rest and Be Thankful" Inn, one starts forth to reach the summit of Dunkery Beacon, the highest point in Somersetshire, only to be matched in height by one or two of the loftiest tors on Dartmoor, and by Brown Willy among the far-off Cornish moors, for Dunkery boasts an elevation of 1,707 ft. It is difficult to realise its height approaching from the Brendon Hills, which themselves attain to 1,200 ft., while the "Rest and Be Thankful" Inn in the dip between the two is 980 ft. above sea-level, for the ascent is gradual, through lanes defended by high banks, till one comes to the end of the enclosed land, passes through Dunkery Hill Gate, and finds oneself at the foot of a long stretch of unbroken heather extending on either hand for miles. We have risen almost insensibly about 300 ft. since leaving the inn, but the last 400 ft. is a hard scramble, for here the purple heather only masks a stone-strewn surface, on which horses' shoes rattle in a most disconcerting way. On the top is a wild mass of stones, the *débris* of the ancient fire hearth when Dunkery was a beacon in reality, and more lately of a cairn put up by the Royal Engineers in the course of the Ordnance Survey, for they used Dunkery as one of their stations for long-distance observations.

Arrived at the summit one realises as in a flash that this is the monarch among the surrounding hills. One has climbed up a paltry four hundred feet of wild heathery hillside, but before one lies a steeper, longer slope of longer, wilder heather, falling abruptly 1,000 ft.

and more into the Horner Valley, along which, beneath a leafy screen, a clear rushing stream hurries down to meet the sea shining in the distance across the fertile vale of Porlock, just where the long grey ridge of water-worn pebbles ends at the rocky promontory of Hurlstone. The ridge consists of rounded pebbles about the size of a cricket ball, curiously washed by the sea, but a glance at the salt marsh behind one will warn one not to stand there, or anywhere near there, when a south-westerly gale is pouring the waves, with a free run straight from the Atlantic, into that corner of the bay, for then they toss the stones about in wild confusion, frequently throwing them a hundred yards or more across the marsh.

But to return to Dunkery Beacon. What does one see around one? Across the fifteen miles of the Severn sea lies the whole coast of Glamorgan. The dull patch of smoke to the eastward is Penarth and Cardiff; that to the west is Swansea (the farthest point is Worm's Head); inland one can make out the Gwaelo de Garth and the high ground by Dowlais, while far inland the Brecon Hills are clearly discernible. It is a curious view by night. Right opposite are the twin lighthouses which warn the mariner to keep clear of the treacherous Nash Sand; to the east a lightship off Penarth and the light on the Flat Holmes seem close at hand; but the first thing that catches the eye is the long range of electric lights on the docks at Barry and Penarth. Then the ironworks can be distinguished as one

after another they work a Bessemer steel furnace, lighting up the surrounding country as with a search-light. Old Dowlais, Cyfarthfa, Ebbw Vale, Plymouth, New Tredegar, and the New Dowlais each in turn lights up the hills, while away to westwards there is an abiding glare which tells that work in the furnaces of Swansea ceases not night nor day.

The view from Dunkery varies, of course, with the state of the atmosphere, but under favourable circumstances an immense area is visible. Let the eye follow up the waters of the Bristol Channel, and in a very clear light three conical hills, one behind the other, are easily recognisable as "Malvern's Lonely Height." This is probably the farthest point ordinarily visible, though the Ordnance Survey men, it is believed, identified some very distant points. But on any reasonably clear day there are many distant objects which are easily discernible.

The islands in the channel are the Steep and Flat Holmes, with Worle Hill marking where the ancient Phœnicians embarked the lead from Mendip, and where the modern excursionist to Weston-super-Mare enjoys himself upon the sands. The Mendip Hills are almost shut out by the line of the Quantocks, whose bold outline fills the eastern horizon. Away to the south-east a dim line of hills is the Blackdown Range, separating Somerset and Devon and terminating above Wellington, where an obelisk to the memory of the Iron Duke may be discerned with the glasses. In the foreground are the Brendon

Hills, terminating in Haddon Hill in the deep woods below which couches many a lordly stag. From almost at our very feet a valley finds its tortuous course to the southward. The Quarme Water runs down it to meet the Exe coming from the westward, and we can trace the deep-wooded valley, down which their united waters flow, extending for miles and miles, till it is lost in the dim distance, where a depression in the high ground far away shows where Exeter lies hidden, and where the tiny stream which rises almost at our feet flows out a broad and stately river into the English Channel. A very faint line of hills a little to the east of this is the high land above Lyme Regis, while the curious V-shaped gap which is visible in very clear weather shows where Sidmouth basks in sunshine on the seashore.

Passing westwards one sees the bold heathery heights of Winsford Hill, some 1,500 ft. in elevation, dividing the dense coverts in the Exe Valley from the denser woodlands in the valley of the Barle. Beyond that the long purple line of Anstey Common, Molland Common, and South Molton Ridge marks the southern boundary of what may truly be called the Exmoor country, but the eye passes beyond them, and is arrested by a far-away ragged outline standing high against the sky and getting wilder and more ragged towards the west, which one wants no guide book to tell one is Dartmoor, with Yes Tor and Cawsand Beacon towering above the general line. A little west of Dartmoor we may, with luck,

just make out the dim outline of Brown Willy afar off in Cornwall.

But let us look closer home, for there at our feet lies spread out what we have come so far to see. Exmoor lies before us, fold upon fold, ridge after ridge, purple heather and long yellowy-green grass in countless succession, till afar off one sees the rounded top of Exe Head Hill, where amid the boggy ground, much to be avoided by the uninitiated, the Exe, the Barle, the Bray, the Lyn, and many lesser waters take their rise and hurry down steep-sided combes on their way to the cultivated valleys below. Chapman's Barrows and Hangman Hill above Combe Martin close in the distant view, but it is here, in the foreground, among those deep combes, which under the now setting sun look but like shadows, that the real home of the red deer lies. Here at our very feet is his birthplace and his nursery, for here on this bleak hillside, among the black soggy ground not half a mile away, and in these narrow combes below us, a vast proportion of the herd of hinds elects to spend the winter. On those heathery moors, secure from disturbance, they lay down their spotted calves and gently tend them during the early summer months, while their lords are in seclusion enduring the agonies entailed by growing a new set of antlers. And here when their appointed day comes, in rain, or hail, or sleet, it may be they show that with the best of hounds and science it may take all day to kill a hind.

Down from this high land before us descend into the fair country of Devon the Exe, the Mole, and the Bray. These and their tributaries run, as do all West-country streams, in deep wooded valleys such as the deer love, and little by little, as the herd has increased in numbers on Exmoor, and as it has been increasingly hunted, the wild deer have spread, and, being kindly received by a most sporting race both of landowners and farmers, have increased and multiplied exceedingly.

But we have lingered long on Dunkery, the sun is in the west, Cloutsham farm lies 700 ft. below us, where Mrs. Land will give us the best of tea and the thickest of cream, and so we shall find our way on to Porlock Weir, where the waves washing up against the beach shall lull us to sleep.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE STAG AND HIS NATURE.

Captain and leader and lord of the herd,
Bold and alert when his mettle is stirred,
Lithe as a lion and light as a bird,
Royal in crest.—WHYTE MELVILLE.

BEAUTIFUL beyond description as is the scenery of West Somerset and North Devon, it is not to look at scenery that sportsmen assemble there every autumn in hundreds ; it is to go stag-hunting, to see this wild sport carried on, if not with all the ceremony, at all events with all the essential peculiarities which characterised it five hundred or a thousand years ago.

What is it that draws people of all descriptions, in vehicles of all descriptions, drags, carriages, carts, motors, bicycles, to every meet of the Devon and Somerset Staghounds ? The large majority know nothing about hunting and care less, hounds, horses, and even riders are but a spectacle of passing interest, but they have come to "see the stag," a fixed resolve, pursued with a determination which, however laudable at the end of the hunt, is sometimes rather out of place at the beginning. This

desire, however, to have a good look at the deer is not peculiar to the casual visitor; it is common to every stag-hunter, and always has been; it is engrained in the nature of the West-countryman. The intense popularity of the hounds with the labourers, with the women and children, with those in every village who never have a chance of hunting, is because the hounds are the means by which they get to see the stag.

According to the West-country belief, to dream of hunting is by no means lucky, unless you dream that you see what you are hunting; then it is an omen of the best kind.

This desire has probably been common to all countries and ages, and is no doubt due to two causes: first, that it is absolutely essential to a good day's sport that someone capable of judging a deer should see what hounds are running; and, secondly, a right appreciation of the fact so well set out by Manwood: "He is accounted of divers writers to be the most stateliest beast in his gate that doth go upon the earth, for he doth carry a majesty in his countenance and gate."

It is not to be denied that a good stag is an animal which it is well worth making an effort to see, and stag-hunting would be robbed of half its charm if one were not to see the stag; but the effort should be made with discretion and in such a way as not to interfere with sport.

One of the main reasons which makes the ordinary

visitor so anxious to see the stag is a deeply-rooted disbelief in the fact of his being actually wild. Only a few years ago the writer heard a sportsman who had enjoyed a few days with the staghounds questioned on this point. His reply was amusing: "Oh, well, they are not what you would really call *wild*"—with an emphasis—"not like they are in Scotland; they keep them in a park or place of that kind, and turn a few out at a time as they are wanted." A suggestion that they were really wild was met with the politest incredulity.

Yet the red deer with his neighbours on Exmoor, the horse, the badger, the fox, the otter, and the hare are the oldest indigenous animals in England, and their bones are found plentifully in the caves of the Mendip Hills along with those of the elephant, the cave lion, the woolly rhinoceros, and the *hyæna*.

The red deer at one time undoubtedly was found all over the United Kingdom, and the fine herds which exist to-day in Windsor, Badminton, and other parks are merely the descendants of wild deer which have been enclosed. In some parts of Westmorland, as well as in the New Forest, there are, or recently were, a few remaining specimens, while on Dartmoor their extinction is quite recent.

So much has been written by authors, ancient and modern, on the natural history of the red deer, and so faithfully and charmingly has the story of his life

been told by Mr. John Fortescue in his own inimitable style, that it is not necessary to say more than a few words here, and just to touch on a few characteristics a knowledge of which forms a part of successful woodcraft.

Deer are classed generally as gregarious animals, but in the red deer the gregarious instinct is not so strong as in other kinds, and it depends largely on surrounding circumstances, such as food supply and covert.

The little spotted calf is laid down by the hind after being carried by her a trifle over eight months, the spot chosen being almost invariably on heather or long grass, though almost any sheltered undisturbed place will be made to serve on occasion. At this time, and until the calves are strong enough to travel some little distance without fatigue, the hinds lie and feed separately; there may be others not far off, and they may all use the same feeding grounds, but their movements are independent of each other.

The calves are almost all born within a very short period, according to the late Dr. Collyns between June 7th and June 21st; under the old Forest Laws the month following the feast of St. John the Baptist was ordained to be an absolutely close time under penalties of great severity. This, allowing for the change in the calendar, would cover the same period. Dr. Collyns in all his long experience only knew of two cases of calves being born except

between the dates mentioned ; but since then other instances have been recorded, and the writer not many years ago saw a little spotted calf not more than a week or so old quite at the end of September. The little fellow was lying in the deep heather in the Deer Park, just where his mother no doubt had pushed him down and bidden him lie still, and still he lay, while a hundred or more horses thundered by. The writer stood by till the rush was past to prevent his being ridden over, and then looking round he caught sight of a hind trotting backwards and forwards as if in great anxiety just by the slope of the hill into Woodcock Combe ; the moment he left the spot the hind cantered straight up to where her calf had been left and lay down.

It is the common habit of a hind even with a much bigger calf—they frequently run with the hinds for nine or ten months—to make the calf lie down if hounds are on the line, and to wait close by so that hounds may catch a view of herself instead of killing the calf.

It is a point much disputed whether a hind has her first calf at three or four years old, but the better opinion seems to be in favour of the earlier date ; but when once she begins to breed she rarely, if ever, misses a year until she attains a great age. Many directions are contained in some of the treatises on stag-hunting as to hunting only yeld or barren hinds at certain periods of the year, and it

cannot be denied that there are always one or two what the farmers call "long-nosed old hinds" about ; but they are hinds which never have calves, they mostly dwell by themselves, and ape the characteristics of the other sex, even to the extent of growing tushes. These old hinds are, as a rule, easily distinguishable ; but of ordinary hinds of four years old and upwards it would be safe to say that not one per cent. misses laying down a calf. A few well-authenticated cases of twins have been recorded, but they are very rare.

The calf when born is spotted like a fallow deer, but loses his spots at about three months old. During the summer and early autumn the habits of the hinds vary somewhat according to the ground on which they may be. In the enclosed country they always lie in the woods, they live for the most part separately, though where one hind is found, there are probably others not far off ; but on open ground they gather for mutual protection into small herds, and stags on similar ground take a like precaution. Young male deer keep company with the hinds till they are about three years old, when they join the stags, and generally each youngster attaches himself to an older stag, who finds him of the greatest service as a look-out, and also as a substitute if hounds are about—the old writers talk of a stag and his " esquire."

Stags are not found in company with the hinds except during the rutting season, which lasts for

about three or four weeks from October 8th. Then every big stag has a harem, consisting of just as many hinds as he can call to him by his "belling," and can keep other stags from taking away from him. Fierce, and occasionally deadly, are the battles that then take place. Food is utterly neglected, the turmoil of love and war fills the peaceful valleys and moors with angry bellowings and the signs and sounds of combat. Stags fence with their antlers with great skill, manœuvring so as to get in a thrust with the brow antler, which is the fighting point, long and nearly straight, sharp as a bayonet. A thrust, delivered with the whole weight of the stag behind it, is a terrible thing, as many a gallant hound and more than one horse has found to its cost. But the fighting stag is quick to parry, and the fight consists mostly of a pushing match, horn locked in horn, and with knees on the ground. At length one fails, his strength gives, and, disengaging, he turns to fly ere his victor can catch him. Fighting mostly takes place at night, and few are the chances of watching a combat; but if one has that good fortune it is well to keep out of the way of the beaten deer, as he is apt to wreak his vengeance on the first thing he sees. A fine ram was found one morning in the field above Exe Cleeve gored to death, no doubt by a stag who had rashly attempted to invade the harem of a stag stronger than himself. On another occasion a stag appears to have run amok at the roots of a torn-up larch tree, and have hung

himself up, so that he perished miserably, and was not found for months afterwards.

It is rare for one stag to kill another outright, but this happened in 1905 to a stag in the coverts above Timberscombe.

A deer with plenty of range and the society of the other sex is practically harmless, but it is far otherwise with a stag kept in close confinement. A farmer who brought one up from its birth and made a pet of it, was gored by it when the rutting season of its fourth year set in, and had the narrowest escape. Nothing but the presence of a friend with a gun saved the life of one of the best agriculturists in West Somerset.

A stag was brought up many years ago by Dr. Clarke, of Lynton, almost from its birth, in a paddock, and was considered quite tame; but when a party of visitors went to look at it, and an usher from Minehead School, in response to the wish expressed by a young lady to see it run, climbed over the paling and rattled his hat, the stag promptly went for him, and finally tossed him, badly hurt, over the railings, after tearing off so much of his clothes that he had to be rolled up in a lady's shawl before he could be conveyed back to the town.

Some years ago, as people were going back from Exford to Dulverton after a day's hunting late in October, they found a big stag had taken possession of the road just by Spire Cross, and was "belling and carrying on terrible, scorting up the stones with

his feet." Those who were mounted made a *détour* over the heather, but the driver of a carriage thought it prudent to wait till the stag moved away. It is most improbable that the stag would have actually attacked if the carriage had been driven straight on at a good pace, but he might have stayed "belling and carrying on" till the last moment, and the horses would most probably have become quite out of control, and an accident resulted. The driver exercised a very wise discretion.

The writer once examined a field of potatoes where two stags had been fighting the night before. It was a curious sight. The antlers had been driven in places deep into the ground, in others they had acted like the coulter of a plough, while the marks of knees on the soft ground were very apparent. The devastation wrought both by horns and feet was complete; a patch of twenty yards each way was dug as thoroughly as ever the farmer could have done it with a *bisgay*—they do not use a potato-fork in that country—and the hinds had finished the mischief by eating the potatoes afterwards when peace was restored.

With the exception of a feeble bleat, used only to a very young calf, the hind is mute, and the stag's only sound is the roaring or belling note to which he gives vent in the rutting season to summon his attendant hinds, and to bid defiance to all the world beside. It is a weird sound when heard at night, very startling when heard for the first time, and it

has a peculiarly disturbing effect on horses if close at hand.

The sound is not easy to describe; it differs entirely from the bellow of a bull or the roar of any beast of prey, though it sometimes ends in a succession of short coughs, such as a lion gives when he is really angry. It is emitted through the mouth, not the nostrils; the head is usually held high, with the nose thrust forward; the fore feet are held wide apart and rather forward, as if to resist pressure from behind, and, indeed, the whole muscular power of the body seems to be used to drive the air from the lungs through the mouth, the most noticeable point being a strong vibration in the sound, which makes it audible at a great distance. One may hear the stags belling any October evening in the woodlands round Exmoor, and occasionally in the daytime, but it is not easy to get a chance of watching one at close quarters. This the writer was lucky enough to do recently in an enclosed park, and, a due retreat being secured, was able to stand within a few yards of a grand stag, carrying all his rights and three on top, who was so absorbed in defying his enemy that he was oblivious of all else. The coughs sometimes heard appear to be terms of abuse, for the stag would run forward a yard or so in a crouching attitude, and then suddenly throw up his head and give two or three short coughs and stamp his fore foot. The whole action and attitude were intensely provocative and insulting, and generally had the effect of making the

enemy very angry, but he gave way a yard or so each time. Darkness closed rapidly in and all hopes of watching a combat were at an end.

The tawny coat which has given to this species its distinctive title of red is common to both male and female, and differs but slightly in individuals. The hind is, if anything, a little duller in colouring, and the lighter parts under the belly are greyer than in the male.

It frequently happens that there is great apparent difference in colour between deer seen together, and we have all heard wonderful stories of the "girt black stag" of such and such a place, and have even been privileged to see him, but it is black peaty mud on a russet coat all the time. All deer love to roll in water or mud to cool themselves. The older deer learn that mud keeps off flies and they increase their devotion to the mud bath—the blacker the mud the better they seem to like it. If they are lying on Dunkery or on Exmoor, they can readily find mud of a blackness as complete as that of any ink ever advertised, a fact which the wearers of many a smart, light-coloured habit or grey tweed suit have found out to their disgust, and have also found that the stain does not wash out with the same facility that it does out of the coat of a red deer.

During the rutting season the long hair on the neck and throat of a stag grows to a considerable length, giving him almost the appearance of having a ruff round his neck.

Deer have been occasionally recorded with patches of white about them, and, indeed, tradition points to there having been harts in England, as there are a few still in Germany, wholly white. The White Hart is a common sign for an inn, and hart is the ancient and proper term for the full-grown male of the red deer, not the fallow. Our ancestors in days gone by were extremely punctilious in the correct use of terms of venery. White fallow deer are quite common, but in spite of the fact that the signboard artist almost invariably draws a fallow buck, there must have been, it would seem, some traditional existence of a white hart. That he was then, as now, a *lusus naturæ* is probably to be inferred from the fact that he usually wears a collar and chain.

The teeth of all deer are like those of sheep—that is to say, they have two cutting teeth in the lower jaw as yearlings, four as two-year-olds, and so on till they get a full mouth of eight teeth at four years old; stags at five years old develop two tusches in the upper jaw. The upper jaw has no cutting teeth.

The red deer is properly described as hart or stag, hind, and calf, while the terms buck, doe, and fawn are confined to fallow deer.

The term hart is not used in the West.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE STAG'S HEAD.

Then here's to him who leads the hunt
With Tally Ho! Away!
And brow, bay, and tray, my lads,
Brow, bay, and tray.—WHYTE MELVILLE.

THE most remarkable thing about a stag—that which makes him “The stateliest beast in his gate that doth go upon the earth”—in his “head”—to use the correct expression, his antlers, in common parlance. The term “horns” is wholly inapplicable to the head of a deer, but has been in common use from very ancient days, as witness the old rhyme:

If thou be hurt with horn of stag
’Twill bring thee to thy bier.

Horn is a mass of fibre compacted together with glutinous matter, and is hollow, with a core of sensitive bone duly supplied with nerves and blood vessels, whether the horn grows from the head, as in a cow, or from the foot, as in the hoof of a horse. Horn is not shed annually; it is worn away and replaced by growth.

The antlers of a deer are shed every year, and are an almost solid mass of bony deposit without nerves

or blood vessels, their growth being perfected within about eleven or twelve weeks from the time the old head is "mewed" or shed.

During the end of April or the beginning of May stags shed their antlers. They simply loosen and fall off as the deer brushes through covert, or jumps a bank into a feeding-ground. Mr. Capel, of Bulland Lodge, picked up seven fine antlers in four days within a few yards of a rack in the fence which divides Middle Hill from a field of young grass, showing obviously that they had been jerked off on landing. A raw socket is left in the skull which bleeds slightly, and as it heals over forms a soft tumour. This socket is formed by a hollow projection from the frontal bone, and one of the most curious points in this most remarkable phenomenon is that this projection alters from year to year not only in height but in shape, one of the best-known marks of a very old stag being the shortness of the pillar or projection. The soft tumour continues to swell and enlarge, and gradually forms the antler. The process is thus described by Dr. Bell, as quoted in Dr. Collins's work: "The growth of the horn is an astonishing instance of the rapidity of production of bone under particular circumstances, and unparalleled in its extent in so short a period. During its growth the branches of the external carotid arteries which lend their assistance in the formation are considerably enlarged for the purpose of carrying the great flow of blood required for the formation of bone. It

extends by means of the velvet (a plexus of blood vessels) all over the external parts of the horn. It is quite soft and highly vascular, so that the slightest injury causes blood to flow freely, and the horn, when this occurs, to be imperfectly developed." When the antler has attained its full size all its points are still soft, and one may sometimes see them bent where they have met with any injury. The last part of the antler to develop is the burr or row of "pearls" round its base. The development of these pearls presses upon and constricts the arteries, thus cutting off the supply of blood, and the velvet gradually dries up and comes away, a process which the stag hastens by rubbing against a tree—a specimen young pine for choice, if there be such a thing handy—to the no small detriment of the tree. The antler is then pure white bone, a defect which the stag quickly remedies by rolling in the first peat hole he can find. In former days, when charcoal burning was extensively carried on round Exmoor, the old charcoal pits were favourite places for this purpose. A stag's head can at any time be washed nearly white with a sufficiency of soap, hot water, and a scrubbing brush. The antler is generally full grown about the end of July; the points are usually hard by about August 12th, when stag-hunting begins, and the velvet comes away by about the end of the first week in September; but no hard or fast rule can be laid down. In some seasons stags are forward in condition, in others the reverse is the case.



Young Red Deer—Antlers in velvet.

In 1905 stags were very forward, and on the opening day a heavy stag came out of covert with a strip of velvet torn off almost the entire length of one antler, leaving the white bone showing plainly, a thing which could not have happened unless the velvet was beginning to dry up. The stag broke not more than 200 yards from where he had been couched, and though possible, it is extremely improbable that he did the injury in that short distance.

During the time the antler is forming, the stags are a prey to flies; they dare not lie in the cool coppices, because every twig would lacerate the velvet, causing apparently intense pain. High open wood is little better, and for the most part they lie still and suffer in the glare of the sun on the open heather, with a dense cloud of flies hovering over them and crowding on the velvet till it looks black. A careful stalk and a good glass will show the animal, which a few weeks ago was a lordly stag, and in a few weeks more will be so again, a truly deplorable object with twitching head, and constantly moving ears, being literally eaten up by the flies.

Antler seems the most nearly correct term one can use when one does not speak of the "head," though in the Boke of St. Albans the term is confined to the brow antler, the lowest of the three "rights."

"Thou shall call the head of a hart auntelere,

riall, surriall; and when you may know him by the toppe, you shall call him forked a hart of tenne, and when he beareth three on the top you shall call him a harte of twelve: and when he beareth fourre you shall call him summed a hart of sixteen, and from fourre forward you shall call him summed of so many as he carrieth how many soever they be."

Manwood calls the lowest point the brow antler, just as we do now, and the others royal and surroyal. From this it would appear that the term antler should in strictness apply only to the brow, and in practice the West Country-man, though he has no book learning on the subject, rarely if ever speaks of the bay antler or the tray antler, but of the bay and tray "points."

It is curious that among all the voluminous treatises ancient and modern it is impossible to find a correct technical term for the whole of the growth on one side. The term in most common use is antler, distinguished as "near" or "off."

In Scotland the sportsman follows closely after the rule of the Boke of St. Albans, and calls his stag a stag of ten or twelve as the case may be; this usage has never prevailed in the West, and we say a stag has "brow, bay, tray, and three," or "two," as the case may be "on top." If a stag has brow, bay, and tray, he is said to have all his "rights," and would then be described as having "all his rights and three," or whatever the number might be, on top.

A male deer under one year old is called a calf and has no antlers, but is none the less easily distinguishable by the shape and pose of the head, which he carries thrown back, as if conscious of what will one day be there.

As a yearling he carries two small knobs of bone, and is called locally a knobber, or more correctly a brocket.

As a two-year-old, he bears a short spire or upright, and a short brow antler. He still lives mostly in company with the hinds, and uses the same feeding grounds.

Beyond this it is hard to judge the age of a deer by the head alone, so much depends on feeding and the nature of the ground where the deer live. Where deer can feed nightly on arable crops, corn in the autumn, turnips in the winter, and particularly where they have access also to oak woods where they can get plenty of acorns, or where Spanish chestnuts abound, they do not "go back," to use the local term, or lose condition, during the winter, and they undoubtedly develop better, stronger heads. The difference, for example, between the heads of Quantock deer, and those which have wintered on the barren wilds of "the forest," is most marked. For the same reason no true deduction can be drawn from the heads of park deer, which are fed on hard food during the winter.

In the Exeter museum is a case showing the successive pairs of antlers of the deer mentioned in

a previous chapter as being kept in a paddock at Lynton. These show more development and a greater number of points than is usual; indeed, the four-year-old head might well have been a seven-year-old. From this some people have deduced that the Exmoor deer, having free access to good food, are all about three years younger than they are said to be; this theory is effectually disposed of by the fact that there is a plentiful supply of young deer carrying the normal two or three year-old heads.

All that can be done is to point out the normal development.

A normal three-year-old would have thrown out a tray point on each side and might have in addition two on top on one side. The beam being light and smooth and with little spread between the antlers.

A four-year-old should have brow, tray, and two on top on each side, but he might have two and one, the whole antler, however, should be stronger and heavier, and the spread wider. At this age the deer has a full mouth, so that the age can be ascertained in that way.

At five a deer may have all his rights—brow, bay, and tray, and two on top on each side, but more often misses one point, and should have a small tush showing on each side. Some deer never develop the bay point, some carry it only on one side.

The writer has hanging on the wall beside him as he writes the head of a very heavy old deer known for

many years as the "old Danesborough stag." Hounds were running another stag on the Quantocks, and as they went along the path under Danesborough this old stag, just roused from the sleepy hollow of his thoughts, blundered out of the oak scrub on to the path not ten yards before the pack. They caught a view and coursed him all the way to the Alfoxton fence, which he tried to jump, but fell back. The end was inevitable. No heavy stag, and he was "so fat as a bullock," could stand being suddenly raced like that, for hounds were never a hundred yards behind him till he stood to bay in a cattle shed in Adscombe Barton, and wrought destruction among the pack ere he was taken. It had been a hard winter, and to this yard he had come regularly every night and had shared shelter and provender with the bullocks of that best of sportsmen, Mr. Hunt. This deer was known to be at least twelve years old, but missed his bay points, carrying brow, tray, and four on top on each side, all very strong, well-developed points. The beam is remarkable for its strength. It measures five and a half inches in circumference above the brow, while six inches is the smallest girth above the tray.

At six years old a deer may develop three on top on one side, but in many instances he carries the same head as a five-year-old, namely, two on top, but better developed and with the points on top longer. Beyond this age it is a matter of pure guess work; a deer carrying three good, well-developed points on

each side may probably be eight years old, or ten or more.

Many rules have been laid down for recognising an old stag, but they cannot always be depended on. The most sure are :—

That the burr is set close to the head ;

That the pearls on the burr are large, knobbly, and well polished ;

That the gutters or channels left on the surface of the horn by the arteries are deep and well marked ;

That the beam is heavy and the spread wide.

As a deer gets very old he loses his strength and vitality, and his antlers begin to "bate" or "go back." The points are less strong and less sharp, those on top being frequently rounded or otherwise imperfectly developed. The head, in fact, becomes less efficient as a fighting weapon. Age is often difficult to judge, and many a heated controversy takes place among the experts over the body of the deer ; but the condition of the teeth can generally be relied on to settle the discussion. In a very old deer the teeth are worn and often loose or missing.

There have been endless controversies as to the longevity of stags, and instances have been adduced to prove ages that sound fabulous. Thirty years, forty, even a hundred and over, have been alleged. No ages approaching these have, so far as the writer is aware, ever been duly authenticated in the West.

The best authenticated case of age which has come

under the writer's notice was that of a stag found in Court Wood when Col. Hornby was Master. He only ran to the lower end of Bye Hill, about a mile and a half, and hounds rolled him over in the water without an effort. He was no bigger than a two-year-old, but carried a small, well-spread head with brow, tray, and three on top on each side, the beam being very light and the points between two and three inches long. He had hardly any teeth, and his slot was like that of a two-year-old, which, no doubt, accounted for the harbourer never having harboured him. He was ear-marked with a peculiar mark which Mr. Bawden, of HawkrIDGE, recognised as an old sheep-mark of his. It transpired that he had rescued a two-year-old male deer badly mauled by some hounds, had nursed it in his farm buildings, ear-marked it, and turned it out in the year before HawkrIDGE Church was restored; this enabled the date to be fixed, and the consequent age of the stag was nineteen. This is the only instance known to the writer of any considerable age being adequately proved.

It has been said that deer are at their prime at fourteen; this would certainly not be true on Exmoor, where ten or eleven would be a more likely age.

Two points which have been much debated are whether the heads in Devon and Somerset are as big as North-country heads, and whether they are as big as they were in days gone by.

The writer has not sufficient experience of Scottish "heads" to answer the first query authoritatively. Some immense heads from the Highlands were shown at the Burlington Gallery some years ago, among which were heads certainly bigger than any Exmoor has produced of late years. But it must be remembered that there are many more stags in Scotland, and that for one old West-country house which has preserved its "heads" over a long series of years there are a hundred or more in Scotland.

It is to be regretted that at that exhibition there were none of the old heads which grace the walls at Holnicote, Killerton, Castle Hill, Youlston, Watermouth, and other places where they are preserved.

Pages and pages of statistics have been published on the subject, but they prove little except that a number of fine heads are in existence. No notice is taken of the medium heads, yet it is by the medium heads, and not by the number of abnormally big heads, that the question of general superiority should be decided.

The various packs hunting in the West now kill perhaps fifty to sixty stags a year, and a few years ago a score would have represented the average. It would be absurd to expect to find so many big heads as in the North, but the West-country heads taken on an average are, it has been said by many competent judges, better than the average heads in Scotland, though with scarcely so good a spread.

The record Scotch head of recent years was

killed by Lord Burton in 1893—a stag with twenty points, that is all his rights and seven on top on each side. The points on top are all well developed, the beam strong and heavy, but the spread not remarkable for a big head.

Exmoor has not of late years produced anything quite as good as this, though on September 8th, 1786, the "Old Badgworthy Deer" was killed with all his rights and seven on one side and six on the other. This head is in the possession of Sir Thomas Dyke Acland, and there is a drawing of it in "The Chase of the Wild Red Deer." In the same work an opinion is expressed that such fine heads were not taken at that time, 1861, as were found in old days. That may have been true then, but cannot, I think, be said to be correct now. There have been very many fine heads taken of late years, some of which are worthy of notice.

The place of honour must be given to the St. Andries stag, taken after a fast gallop on the Quantock Hills on Friday, October 13th, 1893, the chief feature of this head being the great development of the beam. The points were brow, bay, and tray on each side, with five points on top on one side and three on the other.

The measurements were :

Outside curve of horn, burr to tip	...	...	36	inches.
Spread, beam to beam, below the forks, measured				
inside to outside	...	...	30½	"
Girth of beam below forks	...	...	7½	"
Girth of beam between bay and tray	...	...	7½	"

The head now hangs in the hall at St. Andries with many other fine trophies.

A stag with a curious malformed head was killed on October 24th, 1903, which might have been just accounted to have seven on top on each side. He was described in the *Field* as follows: "He had an extraordinary head, with a big, heavy beam, and brow, bay, tray, all well-developed sharp points. On the top of each antler was a flat palmated formation about the size of a man's hand, with seven distinct points set round the edge. The points were distinct but were very small. They would just answer the test of hanging your hunting-crop on them." This stag suddenly appeared from no one knows where about a fortnight before he was killed. He had been moved on by tufters. Afterwards he had been seen almost daily in and around Hawkridge, and when killed was found to have a broken leg.

Curiously enough none of the stalkers in the district had ever seen the big stag Lord Burton killed, and he only came across it by accident in the middle of a stalk, and killed it with a long snap shot. Where old deer hide themselves has always been a problem, but how deer with such noticeable heads could escape observation from trained eyes for so many years is perfectly inexplicable.

The spread of Exmoor heads is generally less than that of Scottish deer, but the head killed by Mr. Sanders in 1896, measuring $38\frac{1}{4}$ inches from outside

to inside of beam below the fork would be bad to beat anywhere, as also would Mr. Amory's fine head, taken at Chain Bridge in 1897, for its remarkable length of $39\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

Mr. Sanders secured a noticeably fine head on September 6th, 1902, after a good run from the Dunster Coverts to Horner Mill. The beam is long and of great girth. The points, which are all long and well developed, are brow, bay, and tray on each side, with four on top on one side, one of these points being exceptionally long and heavy, and six good points on top of the other side. A very level, well-balanced, handsome head.

On October 11th of the same year a stag which carried a peculiar head was killed under Brewer's Castle after a very long and hard run. The beam was of rather more than average size, with brow and tray on each side, and on the off antler three long points and an offer. On the near antler were three points matching the other side exactly, while a broad flat "tine" ran back almost at right angles to the beam, ending in two distinct points, and having two points springing from its upper side. Seventeen points in all.

This peculiarity of head had been observed for several years, so that the deer was probably of considerable age, though his slots, his teeth, and his general appearance were not those of a stag in extreme old age.

The herd was probably at its strongest numerically

in or about 1902, and four packs of hounds, hard at work trying to diminish their numbers, succeeded in killing fifty-five stags. Appended is the record of their heads, which is very well worth study, as it is doubtful if any forest in the north, killing a similar number, could show such a return. Subsequent years have shown excellent heads, but 1902 stands easily first.

"Of the thirty-five deer killed by the Devon and Somerset, one was a three-year old that was lame, two were four-year-olds, and one, the last deer taken, was of doubtful age, carrying brow, tray, and up-rights, but with a wide spread, while his mouth showed him to be at least five years old and probably more." In the following table, B. stands for brow, B.B. for brow and bay, T. for tray, and the figures for the points on the top of each antler.

DEVON AND SOMERSET STAGHOUNDS.

July 28.	B.T. 1—1. (A lame three-year-old.)	Sept. 1.	B.T. 2—1. (A four-year-old.)
Aug. 1.	B.B.T. 3—2.	" 6.	B.B.T. 6—4. (A very massive, level head, the finest killed for many years.)
" 4.	B.B.T. 2—2.	" 12.	B.B.T. 3—4.
" 6.	B.T. 3—2.	" 12.	B.B.T. 3—2.
" 8.	B.T. 2. B.B.T. 3. (The opening meet of the regular season.)	" 20.	B.T. 2—2.
" 11.	B.B.T. 2—2.	" 22.	B.T. 4. B.B.T. 3.
" 13.	B.B.T. 3—2.	" 24.	B.T. 3. B.B.T. 4.
" 22.	B.B.T. 2—1. (An old deer probably going back.)		

Sept. 25.	B.B.T. 4—3.	Oct. 13.	B.B.T. 3—3.
" 27.	B.T. 2—2.		B.T. 3—3.
" 29.	B.B.T. 2—2.	" 15.	B.T. 4—5.
Oct. 1.	B.B.T. 3—3.	" 18.	B.B.T. 3—3.
	B.T. 3—2.	" 22.	B.B.T. 3. B.T. 3.
" 4.	B.T. 3—2.	" 24.	B.T. 2. B.B.T. 2.
" 6.	B.T. 7—3. (A very curious head.)		B.T. 1—1 (Pro- bably five years or upwards.)
" 10.	B.B.T. 2. B.T. 2.		
" 11.	B.T. 3. B.B.T. 2.		

SIR J. H. H. AMORY'S STAGHOUNDS.

Sept. 18.	B.B.T. 3. B.T. 3.	Oct. 14.	B.B.T. 4—3.
" 26.	B.B.T. 2—2.	" 21.	B.T. 2 (on offside, a short deformed antler on near side).
Oct. 4.	B.B.T. 2. B.T. 2.		
" 8.	B.T. 4. B.B. 2, and 2 offers.		
" 11.	B.B.T. 2. B.T. 2.		

BARNSTAPLE STAGHOUNDS.

Sept. 13.	B.B.T. 2—2.	Oct. 11.	An old stag with a head deformed from an injury.
" 24.	B.B.T. 3—3.	" 25.	B.B.T. 2—2.
Oct. 4.	B.B.T. 3—3.		
" 7.	B.B.T. 2—2. B.B. 1—1. (The Larkbarrow day.)		

MR. STANLEY'S STAGHOUNDS.

Aug. 18.	B.B.T. 4—4. (A particularly fine head.)	Sept. 5.	B.B.T. 3—3.
" 21.	B.B.T. 3. B.T. 2.	" 8.	B.T. —2.
" 23.	B.B.T. 6. B.T. 5.	" 18.	B.T. 2. B.T. 1.
Sept. 2.	B.T. B.B.T. 1.	Oct. 2.	B.B.T. 5—4.
		" 11.	B.B. 3—3. (From Slowley.)

It has been the fashion for some time in Scotland to call a stag with all his rights and three on top on

each side a "Royal." How this arose is not clear; the name in that connection is utterly unknown in any of the old books on stag-hunting. Manwood lays down as follows: "If a stag come to be six years of age, then he is a hart. But if a King or Queen do hunt, or chase him, and he escape away alive, then after such hunting or chasing, he is called a hart royal." This learned author goes on to describe how if a King hunted a stag out of the forest and was unable to take him there after a good run he made proclamation for him to be left in peace to return to the forest, when he was known as a "Hart Royal Proclaimed."

In quite recent years a few South-country tenants of forests have taken to talking of a stag carrying four on top on each side as an "Imperial," but this is nothing but an ignorant absurdity.

The term "Royal" has always been entirely unknown on Exmoor.

While one may justifiably maintain that the heads of the present Exmoor herd are as good, on an average, as those of any part of the kingdom in modern times, it cannot be denied that the herds which roamed over this country in prehistoric days were more amply furnished. Antlers, and portions of antlers, of a size larger than any we see now are recovered from among the roots of the trees in the submerged forest in Porlock Bay, and also from the sands in Morecambe Bay, whither they were probably driven by wolves from their home in the Fells.

The original Irish deer, judging from the magnificent specimens which have been recovered from the peat bogs, and now grace the halls at Longleat, Adare, Powerscourt, and other places, were not only of larger size, but they carried in many cases four rights or points below the fork on top. This is commonly found at the present day in German forests, but is extremely rare in England.

Deer with one horn are not infrequent, and at one time there were several on the Quantock Hills. Whether the peculiarity is, or is not, hereditary has been much debated, but at the time when there were so many on the Quantocks there was one very old stag there who might well have sired the rest.

In some cases there is no doubt that the loss of the antler is due to injury, and more than one stag has been found to lack the eye on that side as well. A one-horned stag is usually much more savage than one whose antlers are perfect.*

On October 4th, 1901, a stag with three horns was killed in the Exe. The question which exercised the minds of those who saw the head was whether the long spire, $21\frac{1}{4}$ inches long, which ran upwards

* Nott stags, that is stags with no horns, are comparatively common, one being seen at intervals of about five or six years; they generally live to a good age, as only the initiated can tell them from hinds at a distance, so they are not "holloed."

outside the off antler, was merely a redundant point starting from the beam, or was in reality a third antler. This could not be decided until the skull was cleaned ; even then it was a matter of opinion, though most of the experts held it to be a third antler, for, in addition to having a burr around the base of the antler, there is a corresponding bony formation on the skull. The socket, or as the French call it "pivot," from which the normal antler starts on the off-side, where the duplication takes place, is almost the same size as that from which the antler on the near side springs, and is about the same height ; but, instead of being completed into a perfect circle, it joins a little lower down, and outside, a second socket rather larger in size which protrudes in a curious way over the eye, a section of the whole being rather like a badly-formed figure eight. The burr follows the shape of the socket, and the beam and the spire touch and are joined for about an inch. The beam of the normal antler, which carries the ordinary brow, bay, and tray, measures $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches in girth, and the spire or third antler $5\frac{1}{8}$ inches.

Those who held it all to be a single antler based their view on the fact that though there was apparently a separate pivot line the junction of the two above the burr would have prevented each from being shed independently.

This was another instance of a stag with a noticeably peculiar head never having been seen till a week or two before he was taken. He appeared to

be about six years old. That external causes may cause abnormal growths of horn can be understood, but what can have caused such an alteration in the structure of the skull must ever remain an insoluble mystery. This was the stag which was photographed when at bay, and his gallant fight shown nightly on the Bioscope at the Alhambra, the peculiar formation of the head being clearly visible in the pictures.

It is not easy to compare the weight of West-country deer with those of other places, owing to the differences in the methods of weighing. In Scotland the stag is usually weighed with skin and head on, being simply gralloched; but the practice varies on different forests. We weigh our deer clean, head and skin, heart, liver, and slots removed, simply the butcher's meat, as one sees a sheep hanging in a butcher's shop. There can be no doubt, however, looking at the weights recorded in the papers, that the Devon and Somerset deer are rather heavier than their northern cousins.

The big stag mentioned above, killed by Mr. Amory, is stated to have weighed clean 333lb. This is far and away bigger than anything previously recorded, and, indeed, he must have realised the common description of "so big as a bullock," for his live weight must have been somewhere about 440lb. A good many deer have been recorded whose weights varied from 250lb. to 300lb., but cases over 300lb. are very few and far between.

Hinds are not killed in the same season as stags, but in the winter, when, of course, they have lost much weight, a fair-sized hind in January should weigh from 100lb. to 120lb.; but the weather, and particularly the prevalence of snow, causes much variation.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE HARBOURER.

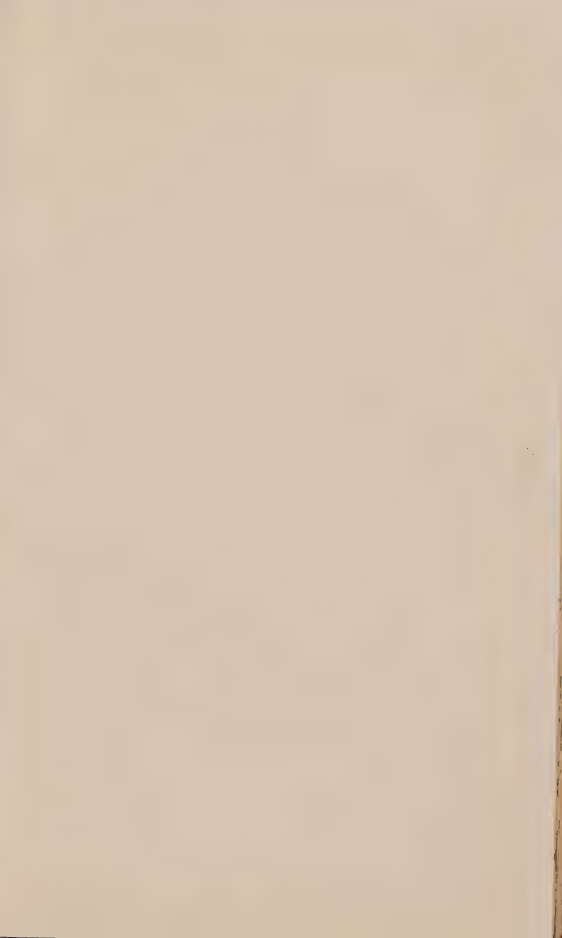
First came the harbourer
Before the dawn was clear ;
And here he stooped, and there he stood,
And round the combe he made it good,
And harboured in the lower wood
A warrantable deer.—WHYTE MELVILLE.

ONE of the first things a sportsman from "up the country" should do on arriving in the West for a season with the staghounds is to disabuse his mind of the idea that the chase of the stag, because it is "hunting," must necessarily be carried on in the same way as fox-hunting. Fox-hunting and stag-hunting are as utterly different as fox-hunting and otter-hunting. One is frequently asked which is the better *sport*—a question it is utterly impossible to answer. Both are equally good sport, each of its own kind ; but whether any individual will enjoy one more than the other depends to a large extent on the individual himself. The man who comes down to Exmoor expecting the pack to bustle a stag out of a thick woodland, many hundred acres in extent, as if it were a gorse covert in Leicestershire or Meath, will go home sorely disappointed.

But if he will remember that what he does not understand is not therefore necessarily foolish, and that the master and hunt servants do know what they are doing, and are only carrying out, as adapted to modern conditions, the theories and practice which have been recognised as most conducive to sport for upwards of five hundred years, he will find much to learn, and beginning to learn will enjoy, and end up by being filled with that enthusiasm which every year draws some of the hardest riders and best sportsmen in England to spend their autumn among the hills, combes, and lonely moors of West Somerset.

As we jog on to the meet we find horsemen and ladies, a very large proportion of ladies, people on bicycles, people in carriages and motors, and some on foot all wending their way to the appointed spot. There in the midst of a dense crowd are the hounds in charge of huntsman and whip, whilst talking with the huntsman is a keen-looking man in grey, well mounted on a stout, active cob. The men are on their tufting ponies, and a group of second horsemen wait not far off. Punctual to the moment up canters the Master and enters into a short consultation with the man in grey and the huntsman. It doesn't last long, a nod and "all right" and he turns to talk to his friends.

The farmers always look jovial at the meet, but one can generally detect one face more jovial, more covered with smiles, than the rest. "Got a stag for





Taking Tuffery from Cloutsham to Sweet Tree.

us, Mr. So-and-So?" "Lord bless you, sir, got plenty; the place be full wi' 'em; lor, there, I mustn't tell you wher' they be to, but they been making work with my oats cruel, that they have." "Hounds, please, gentlemen." The man in grey leads off with the jovial farmer, huntsman and hounds follow, and the field after them. We jog on to a farm, the huntsman and whip dismount and shut up the hounds in a stable. Then the huntsman opens the door cautiously, and, stopping the rush with a word of warning, calls out by name four couples. How different are their different ways. Some trot out soberly and stand waiting for the fun to begin, some dash out wildly and rush about excitedly, while others with nose in air proclaim their joy. Huntsman and whip remount their ponies, and the quiet man in grey takes the command, for he is at this moment the most important member of the hunt—the harbourer. Upon him depends our chance of a day's sport, and he is now about to complete his day's work.

We who have arrived at the meet have really only come in for the second act of the drama; the first act—a purely one-man part—has been long since played by the harbourer.

He has harboured the stag, and when he has enabled the huntsman to rouse him and get him to break covert, his day's work is over; his fee is earned—and well-earned, too.

Let us in imagination go back and begin the drama

at the beginning, and we may learn something about stag-hunting.

Stags are only in season from the time their antlers are fully grown until the commencement of the rutting season—that is from August to the middle of October, and again for a short time in April just before they mew their heads.

Hinds are in season from the latter end of November, when the rutting season is over, until April, when they are too heavy in calf, though in former days they were hunted up till June. But even of male deer all are not suitable for hunting; it is not till he is five years old that he is called a "warrantable" deer, and fit to hunt. The task of the harbourer is to show the huntsman exactly where the best warrantable stag within reach of the appointed place of meeting "harboureth" or has made his bed; to warn him what other deer are in the covert, and to assist him in the tufting—that is, rousing him from his bed and driving him away over the open.

All deer feed and roam about the country at night, and seek shelter in the woods or other coverts by day; and as these coverts are almost always large—in many cases, such as Haddon, Horner Wood, and the Barle Valley, many hundreds of acres in extent—it would obviously be a well-nigh hopeless task to begin to draw without any definite information. It is this information that it is the harbourer's task to supply, and how utterly dependent we are

upon the faithfulness and accuracy with which he carries out a most arduous work—one entailing the utmost skill in venery, and the deepest knowledge of the habits of the deer—only those can realise who can recall the few—very few—days when Fred Goss or his predecessor, Andrew Miles, have been, from stress of weather or other causes, unable to harbour a stag, and we have spent the day drawing covert after covert and finding nothing fit to hunt, only to learn afterwards that there were several good deer in the very woods we did not happen to draw.

As far back as the old books go the harbourer's work was estimated of the first importance, and lengthy treatises have been written in many languages setting out his duties, and how they should be performed. All which rules and advice are as true and as applicable to-day as when they were written.

It is a remarkable thing that the earliest treatise on stag-hunting in the English language was written for the express purpose of instructing the Prince of Wales by Edward Plantagenet, Duke of York, who in right of his wife, Philippa Mohun of Dunster, was Lord of the Manor of Cutcombe, and was also the King's Chief Forester for all Forests South of the Trent. The "*Master of Game*" contains no fewer than seven chapters on the art of harbouring in all possible circumstances, and in all possible places, and only devotes two chapters to the subsequent hunting of the stag.

In only two respects do our harbourers differ in

their practice from the time of the "Master of Game" and the "Art of Venerie." They do not now use a lime hound and they do use the best field-glasses procurable.

A lime hound is a steady hound, breed not specified and probably not important, but usually a bloodhound, with an extra sensitive nose, and absolutely to be relied on not to give tongue. The harbourer, or "valet de limier" as they call him to this day in France, led him in a leash, and thus tracked the warrantable stag from his feeding-ground to the edge of the thick wood where he had made his bed. It is recommended in the "Art of Venerie" that "when he is uppe and readie let him drink good draught, and fetch his hound and make him break his fast a little; and let him not forget to fill his bottle with good wine; and that done, let him take a little vinegar into the palm of his hand, and put it in the nostrils of his hound for to make him snuffle to the end his scent may be the perfecter and then let him go to the wood." The vinegar treatment seems curious and of doubtful expediency.

When the use of the lime hound was discontinued in England is not quite clear; Shakespeare, whose works are a wonderful mine of stag-hunting lore, makes frequent mention of him.

The harbourer, if the woods near the meet are large and he has not received beforehand any definite information, will go the afternoon before hunting to the farm where he intends to spend the

night—he is always a welcome guest—will put up his cob and proceed to take council with the farmer or farmers near, when he will probably hear woeful tales of the amount of injury done to the growing crops by numbers of “terrible girt stags.” These he will receive with all reserve, well knowing that the desire of every farmer in the district is to have his particular stag disturbed and if possible killed. This very feeling of keen, good sportsmanship tends inevitably to exaggerate in their minds the size and age of the stag; besides, a farmer is, after all, a mortal, and does not want a greedy and mischievous animal ravaging his best crops at night for longer than can be helped. There is nothing for it but for the harbourer to walk round and look—not to look, or attempt to look, at the stags—but to look at where they have been feeding, to see what they have eaten, how they have eaten it, and, if possible, to examine the slots or prints of their feet, and so to judge of their weight and age, and see in what covert each is making his couch. He will note the gaps, technically called “racks,” in the fences which they use, going and returning, carefully abstaining from climbing over any of them himself, for the deer would wind him in the morning and go another way, but rubbing out with the end of his stick any slots at the rack or close by. This is in case of bad weather, that he may know the slot he finds in the morning to be fresh even if full of water. A tour of all the feeding grounds will take him till dusk and will involve sometimes a tramp of

a good many miles, but when it is made he should have in his mind a tolerably complete list of all the deer "using" the woods, and be able to form a shrewd guess where they will be lying, for deer use the same beds year after year.

The stag is a much daintier feeder than a hind or young male deer, and the older he gets the more fussy he becomes about his food. It is hard to put in an intelligible form the hundred and one minute signs which a skilful harbourer reads like a book, and can explain to you when on the spot.

Hinds jump into a field with more boldness, and some of them are sure to put down their noses and begin to feed at once, feeding greedily in a patch and clearing everything up as it comes. A stag will probably walk about the field till he finds the choicest, most succulent grass, the fullest ears of corn, and the biggest turnips; then he only takes the best, and mostly keeps on moving forward, plucking an ear, or, rather, the tip of an ear here and a tip there, for he disdains any but the juiciest part at the top. A hind, on the contrary, will eat the whole ear and a good deal of the stalk. A hind eats away at a turnip till it is finished, or nearly so, taking but small bites at a time, just as a sheep does. A stag having a bigger mouth and stronger neck takes a bigger bite, and in most cases tears up the turnip by the root, and with a jerk of his strong neck breaks off what he has got in his mouth, and throws away the rest. He then takes the next turnip straight in front, and his

progress across the field can readily be traced. It is wonderful what havoc a few big stags will make in a turnip field. A dainty dish that a stag can never resist consists of the young sprouts of ash, and when these are nibbled the harbourer may be sure of a stag, for hinds do not touch them. The other signs cannot be absolutely relied on, especially if there is an old yeld hind in the district, for she will ape a stag's peculiarities in feeding as well as in other things.

It is on the slot that the harbourer can most safely rely. From that he can, under favourable circumstances, deduce all he wants to know.

The cloven foot of a deer is a wonderful piece of mechanism, and to its strength and pliability a large part of the springy gait of a deer is to be ascribed. The slot of a stag is naturally larger than that of a hind, and the horn, which is equally strong and hard in male and female, has more weight to sustain, and is subjected to more friction and wear. It is not surprising to find that in a big stag the toes are shorter and blunter and the heel wider, with the cushion or flexible portion at the heel more developed. The edges are less sharp and distinct, and the imprint on the ground less sharply defined.

The natural inclination of both sexes when moving slowly on a hard surface is to keep the two halves of the foot close together, but the hind, with longer toes and less weight to carry, is less careful of this, and carries her toes wider apart than a stag. It is when pace and soft ground come to act on the cloven

foot that the innumerable variations begin which puzzle the unlearned.

A hind playing with her calf or another hind, as they will sometimes in the soft ground by a soiling pit, will leave an enormous slot in the black mire, but it lacks what the stag's slot never lacks—the breadth of heel.

The slot of a young stag is remarkably like that of a hind, and is difficult, except for the experts, to distinguish.

The characteristic differences between the slot of a stag and a hind may be put shortly.

Depth of impression caused by greater weight in a stag.

Breadth of heel in a stag.

Bluntness of toes and edges in a stag.

Each toe longer and narrower in a hind.

Greater play between the toes in a hind.

A stag when walking or trotting puts his feet down in a line one in front of the other, and sometimes crosses his forelegs very much, especially if he is dead-beat; a hind does not do so to the same extent, but her paces are more irregular and her track less straight.

In a heavy stag the inside toes, especially behind, are more worn away than those outside, and sometimes in soft ground one can trace the impression of the dew claws, which point outwards, while those of a hind point straight downwards.

Dry weather or heavy rain in the morning may beat

all the best efforts of the harbourer, the first because the ground is either too hard or too friable to receive a clear impression, the second because rain, though essential for softening the ground, may often frustrate the work of the harbourer by filling up the slots with water and making it impossible to tell the slot of this morning from one or two days back.

The time when a slot was made is often the most difficult point the harbourer has to decide, and he has then to look closely at minute details such as a bruised blade of grass or crushed green leaf, which would be withered had it been exposed to the mid-day sun. Freshly exposed surfaces, whether of earth or stones, will show moisture even when the ground is dry. These and scores of other minute signs the harbourer has to study to enable him to judge the age, sex, and weight of the deer, whither he has gone, and at what pace he was travelling.

Having overnight surveyed his ground, the harbourer must be abroad before daylight, and make his way to some spot whence he may command the route the deer traverse from the feeding ground to the covert. He must approach up wind or they will quickly discover him, and he must keep at some distance off. Goss has the great advantage of a really good pair of Zeiss glasses, and if he can once catch sight of the deer he can sum him up at once, and save himself much time and labour. If he fails to get a view, he must visit the feeding ground and see whether the stag he is looking for fed there or

not, and if he has he must track him to the covert where he has gone to lie down. He should not approach the covert for a good hour after the deer has gone in, as old stags are very suspicious, and are apt to remain watching inside the wood, and if they notice anything unusual they will move away at once.

Wild deer take little or no notice of anything they are used to, but are intensely suspicious of what they do not understand. The writer was out one morning with the late Andrew Miles harbouring at Cloutsham. It was just light, and we were lying in a ditch in the fields near Stoke Pero, watching deer coming over Lee Hill from feeding in the fields by Whitburrow Wood. As a little lot of hinds and calves came along, the farm hands at Pool Farm, the other side of the valley, began making a great clatter loading milk cans into a cart. The hinds just paused, looked, and went on again, but a little way further on they came across the track where we had crossed the hill on foot the evening before. They stopped and sniffed, walked along, went back a little way, and then breaking into a trot cleared it with a bound which must have covered a dozen feet.

When he thinks the stag has had time to lie down and make himself comfortable for the day, the harbourer comes to the edge of the wood, examines and marks the "entry," and then proceeds cautiously to make his "ring walk" round the covert, thus

noting up what other deer have gone in, and whether the stag has lain down, or has simply gone through. In the latter case he must pick up the slot and track him on to another covert, then go round that and "make it good," and so on till he has fairly harboured him.

If the woods are large he may have very cautiously to make good a ride in the covert, so as to know which side the stag is lying, and whether he has other deer lying near him or not.

Having thus harboured his stag, he can return to the farm with the satisfaction of feeling that most of his work is done, get some breakfast—and pretty badly he will want it—saddle up, and ride off to the meet to make his report. It is simple enough if the ground is in good condition and only one stag is in the wood, and he goes to bed at once, but, in unfavourable circumstances, it entails an amount of walking—very hard and heavy walking too—which no one who has not tried it would believe. In the early part of October it is always well, particularly when harbouring an open heather, for two to go together so that one may lie and watch to see the deer does not move, for they are terribly restless in October, while the other goes to the meet.

When deer are sought on the open forest, where there is no covert and slotting is impossible in the heather and long grass, reliance has to be placed entirely on eyesight and keeping watch. On such occasions fog is the harbourer's worst enemy, and

many readers will remember long draws on the wet ground by Pinford when the harbourer has reported that it was too thick to see anything in the early morning.

The harbourer's fee is one sovereign, and well he has earned it by the time a warrantable stag has "gone away." Fred Goss, who is now Lady Carnarvon's head keeper at Pixton Park, was trained by Miles, who for many years combined the duties of keeper to the late Earl of Carnarvon at Haddon and harbourer to the Devon and Somerset Stag-hounds—an employment much more to his taste. He was a hunting man by instinct, a brilliant horseman, and frequently, his harbouring work over, was to be seen going with the best in the run that followed.

Miles got his tuition partly from old Jack Wensley, of Hartford, who is still in the land of the living and as keen as ever, and partly from old Jem Blackmore, who had harboured on the Dulverton side all his life and had in turn succeeded his father. This takes one back nearly if not quite to the beginning of the last century. All in turn inhabited the Keeper's Cottage at Frogwell Lodge, though Goss has now moved to the Head Keeper's Lodge at Pixton.

Neither the Blackmores nor Miles harboured over the whole country, as various owners were prevailed on by their gamekeepers to insist on their own servants having the job in their own coverts. The system never worked satisfactorily. It was all very well on a

day when any tyro could have done the work ; but most of the keepers were quite incompetent to overcome the difficulties which are so frequently met with. Another thing was that they were not sufficiently independent of local opinion. People, even farmers who might be expected to know, are always loath to believe that stags inhabit one set of woods at one season and another set at another season, and that because a stag has lain undisturbed in a covert all July he may not be there in August. A general shift of quarters invariably takes place when the corn is cut. It frequently happened that deer were reported as having done damage, a meet was fixed, and all the village was on the tiptoe of expectation ; but the keeper failed to harbour the stag. He dared not report " no stag " and send the hounds on somewhere else to try, so he reported that he could not exactly " harbour " him that morning, that he had been there two days " ago," and probably had not come out to feed, that he was sure he was there, and so on, with the result that, the Master yielding to local pressure, a day was practically wasted. Had he done otherwise than he did, the keeper's life would not have been worth living in the parish for the next month. The professional harbourer is under no such pressure, he makes up his mind at once and sticks to it, jumps on his pony and gallops off to the next likely covert and has something harboured for the pack to hunt by the time they reach the meet.

CHAPTER V.

OF TUFTING.

Next came the tufters
Tufting through the brake,
And opened on him staunch and sure,
And moved him where he couched secure,
And drove him forward o'er the moor,
His gallant point to make.—WHYTE MELVILLE.

TUFTING is more of a puzzle to the beginner than any of the other peculiarities of staghunting. "Why should you not draw for a stag like you draw for a fox? You know he's there, and you have that advantage over the foxhunter." True; but you draw for *a* fox and you draw for *the* stag. The covert may, and probably does, hold other deer. Supposing you had the best of luck, you might get your stag away a few minutes quicker with, say, half the pack after him; the other half might be split into three or four sections running other deer, who might or might not break covert. The West-country coverts are nearly all in deep, precipitous combes. Rides in the ordinary acceptation of the word there are, as a rule, none; a few stony, scrambling paths are all that is available. Amateur assistance may stop hounds readily enough in the open, but in any

hunt the amateurs who can be relied on to get to hounds running hard in covert and effectively stop them can be counted on the fingers of one hand. More time would be wasted in getting hounds out of a big covert than in the ordinary method of tufting, and meantime your stag would have been conceded an undue start. After all, an ounce of practice is worth a ton of theory, and drawing with the pack has been tried repeatedly in all sorts of circumstances. Experience has shown it to be a fatal mistake unless the harbourer is absolutely certain there is only one deer, and the covert is of small size, and even then it does not always prove a success.

Any sportsman spending a season on Exmoor, and really trying to see and notice what hounds are doing, is sure before the end of the season to see one or two instances of the heartbreaking confusion that may ensue from running into a big covert and rousing from half a dozen to a score of fresh deer. If one deliberately started the day with a muddle of that kind the show of heads at the end of October would indeed be a poor one.

But when all is said and done, tufting is a dull performance for the onlookers if it lasts for a long time, as is in some instances inevitable. The field are not allowed to come tufting, though some few old hands may be asked to watch particular places.

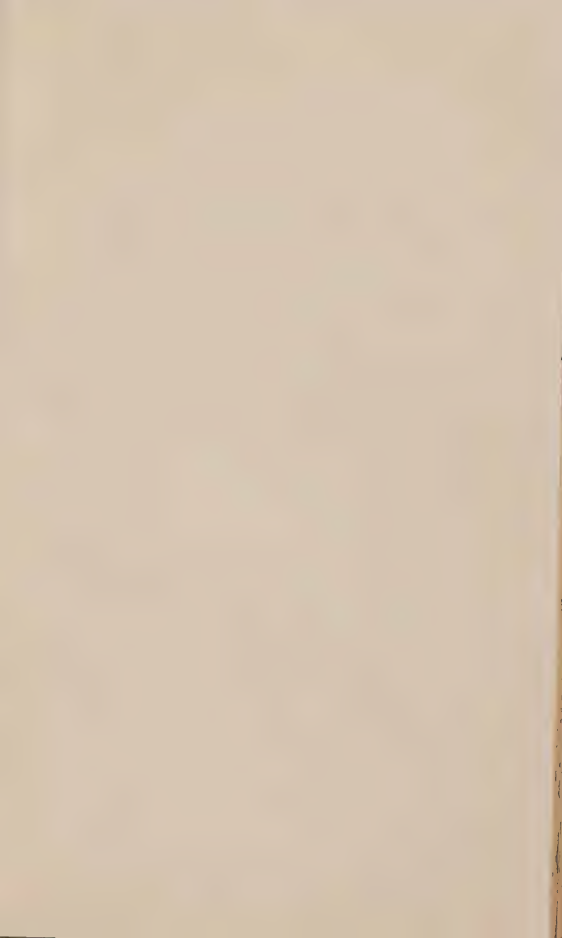
The rest assemble at some spot whence a general view of the covert, always in a valley, can be obtained

and where they are within easy reach of the place where the pack is kennelled. Some few, even now, wait at the farm with the pack, as the majority used to do years ago, but they lose a good deal of sport sometimes. On a fine day it is no great hardship if one has to spend an hour, or even more, talking to one's friends, and there is, after all, generally something to see, though it may on occasion happen that one may have nothing to do but to look down into a deep combe clothed with dark oak coppice, beneath whose leafy screen nothing can be seen, and only an occasional twang of the horn or note of a hound serves as a reminder that one is really out hunting. The whip, a red dot on a hillside a mile away, remains immovable, lunch-time comes, sandwiches are disposed of, or the more dainty dishes which the fair occupiers of some carriage may dispense.

The Master sits immovable on his horse, and the more impatient spirits vote stag-hunting a bore and talk of going home.

"Do you call this hunting?" asked a keen man from the Midlands at a Cloutsham meet, "because I don't. I have come twenty miles to the meet. I have eaten three lunches, and I have not seen a hound all day." He was in a different frame of mind when last seen, just as it was getting dark, on the far side of Farleigh Water, with a dead-beat horse and two shoes off, asking the way to Minehead.

Suddenly one hears hounds running in an





Taking out the Pack, D. & S. Staghounds.

unexpected quarter, one of the volunteer assistants dashes up out of the combe with his horse in a lather, and points at the far hillside. A mile and a half away a pink spot shows in a green field, sharp notes on the horn reach us. The whip has disappeared. The Master gathers up his reins, blows his horn, "Gone away!" and off he gallops for the pack, which bays furiously in its barn; the door is thrown open and away we all go pushing and jostling down the lane, and climb the hill to where Tucker and Fred Goss are waiting, having stopped the tufters. Then for the field the day begins. Tucker and Goss and perhaps one or two more could tell a different tale of the events of the last two hours, as also could Tucker's pony, who has evidently had quite enough, as he is led quietly away home.

Tufting has not altered in theory the least as far back as history carries us, but all theories must be adapted to existing conditions, and the actual practice as carried out to-day is very different from what it was a century ago, and is a much nearer approach to mediæval methods.

The first instinct of a stag, or indeed almost any hunted animal, when roused, is to go at once to where there are others who may relieve him of pursuit.

An old stag rarely if ever lies down to rest, even if not attended by his "esquire," without knowing exactly where to go and find other deer. When the number of other deer in the country was much

smaller than at present the huntsman's task was much easier.

If there were only three deer in a wood, it did not much matter if the stag did rouse the other two—a few couple of steady old tufters were easily stopped and put right, and the stag was bound to be driven out in time. Consequently, the tufter was chosen, for his steadiness and experience, for his obedience, and for his staunchness on one scent; his drive and pace were matters of no consequence. Tufting was a sure process, but it must have been wondrous slow, and, as deer increased and multiplied, became more and more difficult to carry out successfully.

In more recent years better field-glasses and better harbouring have enabled the stag to be more exactly located, or, to use a technical term, more "closely harboured," than was possible previously, with the result that the huntsman has a better chance of rousing the big stag first, before any other deer are moved—a matter of the greatest importance. The ordinary course pursued is to lay the tufters on the line of the stag where he came in from feeding or where he crossed a path, and then let them try to hunt the drag up to where the stag is lying. If the weather is favourable they can frequently do this.

Having roused the stag, the object is to drive him through covert as fast and hard as may be, and not give him time to go looking for other deer, thus, by keeping up the pressure, forcing him to break covert.

A great measure of success has attended this change of policy. We have heard much of the wonderful luck in quick finds and quick getting away of the deer which we have seen of late. It has not all been luck, the quick finds have been due to skilful harbouring, and the quick getting away to the pressure put on the stag at once by some of the fastest and best hounds in the pack.

The qualities for which a tufter is chosen now are, to some extent, the same as before. Obedience is essential; a hound, however good, who cannot be stopped by a rate is useless as a tufter. He must, of course, have a good nose, with pace and dash, and he must be keen at his work, but above all he must fling his tongue the whole way. This is very difficult, for on hot days in August and September under thick covert, especially where there is an undergrowth of bracken, the heat is so great that almost any hound will run mute.

On one occasion under a broiling August sun tufters ran a stag into a big patch of fern on the side of Hartford Cleeve. He was seen not to go on, but hounds could make nothing of it, and one by one came back with their tongues lolling out. The whip dismounted, and went down to help them and induce them to try again. He disappeared into the thick bracken, which was in places over his head, but he soon came back, quite unable to face the stifling heat underneath.

Thick, tall bracken with its strong, hard stems

close together is the most exhausting form of covert hounds have to face, as anyone will readily realise if he tries to ride a horse through it when up level with one's knees.

What a contrast this quicker style of tufting is to the fashion of old days, the Rev. H. W. Thornton in his entertaining book, "Reminiscences of an old West Country Parson," shows, where he gives an account of a staghunt at Cloutsham in 1848. Captain West was Master, and found two stags in the edge of Sweet Tree, one of which went straight to Langcombe Head. The huntsman let the tufters go, and came back for the pack, when all the riders galloped up the Exford Road exactly as we do to-day till the pack came, not to where the tufters were stopped, but to where hounds hit the line over the road. Mr. Thornton was riding a four-year-old pony full of grass, which could not gallop, and got left behind; but, as he naively remarks, this did not really matter as *they were all far ahead of the tufters*, which were old and slow, but eventually overtook him and piloted him slowly and sedately to Brendon, where they found the stag had been killed and all was over.

Take an instance of the other kind. On September 14th, 1899, we met at Hawkridge. Somewhere not far short of a score of stags, three, four, and five year old deer, were lying in Whiterocks, a patch of oak scrub about half a mile long on the far side of thecombe down which runs the Danesbrook.

Whether any special deer was intended to be roused is not recorded, but before hounds had been in covert two minutes the whole lot, or nearly so, were on foot. If we had been using two, or even two or three couple of such tufters as Captain West was using in 1848, we should probably have been hours getting a deer away, and then not till we had worked the whole Barle Valley from end to end. As it was, a couple and a half dashed after one stag, and never let him get away from them. After a few minutes he crossed the Danesbrook and the lower end of Hawkridge, where he was viewed—a well-grown four-year old. The tufters still drove him on without giving him a minute's peace, till he showed on the open by Three Waters, where they were stopped. So began the best run for many years, as shall be told hereafter.

But the driving process does not always succeed : it depends on there being a scent, and sometimes there is little or none ; then the patience and the woodcraft of the huntsman and his assistants comes into play. •

If the stag is roused before any other deer are on foot the tufters will all settle on his line, and make the woods ring again. But the stag is not easily beaten. He has the keenest scent, and working through the covert, is sure before long to put up another deer, when he will, if possible, lie down in the bed from which he has ejected him. Remaining quite still he will frequently let hounds run close

past him, but eventually one of those on the watch is certain to catch a view of the deer which hounds are running, and see that it is not the one wanted. Tufters are then stopped and tried back, generally by laying them on the heel line, when they work back to where the change took place, and once more have the warrantable stag on foot. Sometimes this manœuvre has to be carried out again and again, and much time is expended before the stag can be forced to fly over the open. On some scentless days, indeed, deer have been known to defy all efforts to dislodge them, especially in big woodlands like the hanging coverts above Porlock Weir and in Horner.

The necessity for keeping the field together and out of covert must be obvious at once. It is essential for the hunt servants to get about in covert as quickly as they can, and if the paths are choked up with a crowd of people they cannot do so. In thick woods with the leaf on, much depends on the huntsman being able to hear distinctly. One can frequently hear a stag moving in covert by the rattling of his antlers against the coppice wood. A change in the leading hound generally betokens a change of direction, sometimes a change of deer. It is essential that nothing should interfere with the huntsman's hearing all that goes on; but if the field are in covert they are certain to chatter, in addition to the unavoidable noise made by their horses. Moreover, it is in the interests of the field themselves, for there is no time cut to waste nowadays when once the deer has gone

over the moor, and a stranger in the bottom of a deep wooded combe when hounds go away will probably never see them again. Even when one knows every available track in a covert, it is extraordinary how easy it is to get "left."

A deer has one striking peculiarity which makes a great difference between the method of drawing a covert for a stag from that of drawing for a fox. The crack of a whip or a cheer makes a fox put his head up to listen, and probably also to move. A stag puts his nose on the ground, lays his antlers along his back, and lies absolutely still. The more noise you make in covert the closer will a deer lie. Extraordinary instances have occurred of this. Miles told the writer that he harboured a stag into a small patch of covert which had been cut down a few years before, and was growing up very thick. Arthur drew it carefully twice, and reported it blank. Mr. Bisset was shown the slot where the deer had gone in, and went round the covert himself, and was satisfied the deer had not come out. The pack was brought, and again the wood was drawn blank, and as Arthur rode back to the gateway, pushing his way through the scrub, his horse blundered right on to his nose on top of the stag.

In 1905, four stags were lying in some gorse bushes close to Hinam Cross, and hounds were taken thither while Goss rode forward to rouse the stags, but it was not till he pushed his cob right into the bushes, and practically drove one of them out with

his whip, that they would move. Some few years ago we ran a young stag from the Molland Covert over Anstey Common. Hounds were running well through the furze bushes on the south side of the common, with a field of perhaps a couple of hundred galloping along behind them, but an old stag lay fast in the furze brake with his nose on the ground, while the pack swung by within fifty yards of him, and many riders passed him much closer than that. Yet he never stirred a muscle. In one of the big runs over the forest in 1903, as we galloped through a patch of fern near Withybed, Mr. Gordon Clark's horse jumped clean over a hind which was lying fast.

We all sat one day in a field by Bradley to watch tufters rouse a stag out of some very thick fern and bramble bushes just across a little goyal not big enough to be called a combe. We could see an antler rising above the fern, and watched hounds which had the greatest difficulty in forcing their way through the thick patch of bushes only about thirty yards long by twenty wide. They could just wind deer somewhere, but could not tell where, and it was not till a hound came right on the stag, and dashed at him to seize him, that he deigned to make a move, and then two, and not one only, jumped up. "The Art of Venerie" puts it thus: "And because they should have no sent of him or vent him he will trusse all his iiii feet under his belley, and will blow and breathe upon the ground in some moyst place in such sorte yt I have seen the houndes passe such an harte

within a yeard of him and never vent him : and this subtiltie doth nature endow him with—yt he knoweth his breath and his feet to give him greater sent unto the houndes than all the rest of his bodie. And therefore at such time he will abide ye horsemen to ride ful upon him before he will be reared."

How far the learned author of this classic work may be correct in this theory as to the origin of scent is open to argument, but it is common experience that a deer that lies close, especially in a place where the air is still, is very difficult to rouse. The harbourer may be certain he is there, and hounds, by the way they can be seen trying to wind him, will tell plainly that a deer is somewhere not far off, and yet the huntsman may have to try back again and again before the opening challenge of a tufter is heard, and at least half of an impatient field are thinking how much better and quicker their own huntsman up the country would have drawn the covert.

Scent one can never lay down any rule about, and with a deer it seems more inexplicable than with any other animal. There happens occasionally a day—fortunately but seldom—when hounds can run the line of a hind, but cannot hunt a stag for fifty yards, even when close behind him. A Cloutsham day in the year 1903 was one of this kind—one of the few bad days we had in that wonderful season.

When deer have been harboured on the forest a somewhat different course is pursued.

The "forest of Exmoor," or, rather, that portion

of it north of the Simonsbath Road which is still unenclosed, consists entirely of rough sedgy grass—very soft going as a rule, and much cut up with little combs.

It is among these and in the softest ground that deer mostly lie. Here they lie in herds, and it is rare to find a stag actually alone. An old stag may lie down by himself, but one may be sure he knows the herd is within a hundred yards or so.

There are two courses open to the huntsman. One is to take a very small lot of tufters, and try to separate the deer with them when, if successful, tufters are stopped and the pack brought on. This is theoretically the more correct and desirable method, but when there are a number of deer of various kinds on the forest, and the distance the pack has to be brought is considerable, the amount of law given to the stag enables him to rejoin his fellows, or to find another herd, and the work has all to be done over again. Another objection is that it is difficult to keep up sufficient pressure on the herd to single out the deer desired. Suppose you start, say, from Pinford Bog over the North Forest with one good stag and six smaller ones. At the end of half a mile the herd divides, and the tufters turn back across the wet ground to the warren. Hounds can go two to a horse's one on this ground, and it may be twenty minutes or more before they are stopped, and another twenty minutes before they are laid on the correct line, and the stag and his companions, even

if they have been kept free of any other herds, are best part of the way to Woolhanger or Culbone before the tufters take up the line again, and, before the big stag is separated, he will have travelled many miles, and the chance of a gallop will probably be lost.

The plan usually adopted is to take about ten couple of hounds, leaving the pack with the whip in attendance at Toms Hill, or the Shepherd's Cottage in Badgworthy. The field are invited to come with tufters, as hounds will be allowed to run on. The field picks its way carefully over the somewhat treacherous going on Toms Hill Allotment; is delighted with itself at getting over Little Pinford with only two or three empty saddles; reaches the edge of Buscombe, and there in its peaty depths lies the herd. They jump up, eight or nine of them, hounds catch a view, and away they go at a pace which defies all efforts to catch them.

Then there is a scatter. Tucker goes one way and the Master another to circumvent the bad ground, so that one will be right whichever way they turn. Lord Fortescue, the owner of the land, strides away over the bad ground as if it were turf, followed by a crowd who find his lead is one not easy to live up to. Far ahead five deer can be seen bending away left-handed. Tucker, racing forward, stops two couples of hounds—a third couple has gone on. No matter, they will keep the deer moving and out of mischief. As we come on to sounder ground we can see hounds

skirting Dure Down as if for the Chains. The Master is close behind them. A mile away on the right one pink coat is leading a large contingent of the field to Brendon Two Gates.

Tucker gallops across Black Pits on a track none too sound, and throws his two couple of hounds right in with the others as they come down Long Chains Combe. Away on the shoulders of the hill we can see the three stags speeding along with tufters close behind them, while not two hundred yards off a herd of some twenty startled hinds turn and watch the fugitives, who but for the pace and the pressure would have joined them. Twenty minutes more at best speed over a lovely line of sound going brings us to Saddler's Stone, and there, on the high ground by Longstone, is another big herd. One stag joins them, but the other two head away right-handed for Woolhanger.

After some time amongst the thick plantations, giving horses a much-needed chance, a holloa back tells us the deer have broken. Tufters are soon out of covert on the line, and, running by Shallow Ford, make their way for Furze Hill Common. Here, welcome sight, the younger deer turns away down the water, but the big stag, mindful of the security of the Deer Park, sets his face to the eastward. But where is the Master all this time? He was with us to Saddler's Stone. Seeing the turn things were taking he has galloped hard back to Brendon Two Gates, whence his signal can be seen at Toms Hill, and

soon the pack and the remainder of the field are coming up. Tufters are stopped, and the pack is laid on.

Sometimes one has not such luck, and numerous instances have occurred where we have galloped for half-an-hour or more with only a single tufter in front of us. But, good luck or bad luck, rarely, if ever, does Tucker fail to single out his stag. Many of the field do not care to come on with the tufters, while others declare that some of the best gallops in the season take place after tufters on the forest. But if one rides with the tufters a second horse is an absolute necessity.

Considerable judgment has to be shown in stopping tufters at the right moment, whether in the forest or when drawing a woodland, for sometimes—indeed, frequently—several deer have gone away more or less on the same line, and, unless the tufters are allowed to run far enough clear of the covert, the pack may easily pick up the wrong line. But, as a rule, the sooner hounds are stopped when once clear of covert the better. It is wonderful how soon hounds which have been used a few times for tufting will learn their work, and will stop to a word, even when running on a breast-high scent.

Occasionally one or more tufters will slip away from covert on the line of the stag with disastrous results to the day's sport, for even if scent be good hounds never run so kindly or keenly on the line when other hounds are ahead. It happened from a meet

at Cloutsham in October, 1905, that hounds ran fairly fast through covert on a somewhat catchy scent round by Pool Bridge and Bell Wood, and came back into Horner on two or three lines. The whole covert was alive with deer—it always is in October—and affairs looked hopeless, when word was brought that two tufters had slipped away with the hunted stag across the vale by Luccombe to Selworthy about half-an-hour before.

The pack was laid on at least three-quarters of an hour behind them, and made very slow work of it through Sir Thomas Acland's ilex woods, but quickened up a bit as they ran to Tivington. The stunted furze on Grabhurst reduced us to a walk—and a slow one at that. In the Dunster Coverts we picked up one of the tufters, and, running on by Monkham Wood, came on the other working the water which runs down to Roadwater. A long and patient cast beside the stream was rewarded with a fast ten minutes and a fighting kill by Charget—a big stag with one of the best heads of the season. It was a beautifully patient bit of hound work lasting for hours, and only wanted pace to have made it perfect. It was about 11.30 when that stag was found, and it was pitch dark as we crossed Lype Common on our way home.

CHAPTER VI.

OF HUNTING A STAG.

The hunt is up, the morn is bright and gay,
The fields are fragrant and the woods are green.—
SHAKESPEARE (*Titus Andronicus*).

WHEN once the tufters are stopped the sooner the pack is brought on the better, and it is now the practice to signal for it, instead of the huntsman or whip, as the case may be, galloping back to fetch it. This saves much time and much unnecessary wear and tear of horseflesh, a matter needing consideration when hounds are running hard four days a week.

The moment the horn or whistle is heard and the cry of "Gone away," the appearance of lassitude and indifference which strikes a visitor as characterising a Devon and Somerset field is at an end, and everyone tears after the pack at top speed. There is, indeed, more haste as a rule than there is any necessity for. Huntsman and Master have to change horses, and if riders have to pass any obstacle like a hunting gate or an awkward crossing in a combe, the Master always gives them a chance. If a rider gets left at the start it is more or less his own fault nine times out of ten, but when once hounds begin

to run on the open, on a day when there is a scent, there is no time to hang about, for it takes the speed of a really good horse to keep up with them. Much has been written, and many have been the discussions, as to the need for giving a stag plenty of "law"—plenty of time to make his point without being unduly rattled. It is a difficult problem. It stands to reason that to clap the pack on ten yards behind a fat old stag will be to bustle him so fast at first that he will be utterly blown, and collapse in a very short time. But the necessity for giving law is very greatly exaggerated, as stags on the forest frequently run well for an hour or more when the tufters have started close to them, and give a run with the pack after that.

All a stag wants is a couple of minutes to stand still, look about him, shake himself, and otherwise attend to his creature comforts before settling down to run. This his pace is always sufficient to gain for him whenever he wants it, if he is given anything like a fair chance. To a stag which has been roused by tufters, and has been running in covert for some time before facing the open, law is unnecessary.

The stopping of the tufters and the bringing on of the pack always takes some time. The quickest lay on is generally from Cloutsham, when a stag found in Sweet Tree goes away for the moor; but even then it may be doubted whether the interval between stopping the tufters and laying on the pack is ever less than ten minutes, which is considered ample law



The "Tufters" stopped. Master and Huntsman changing horses, before laying on the pack.

for a carted deer who has been shaken up in a van for an hour or two. As a rule the start a stag gets is nearly twenty minutes, and on occasion much more.

The idea that by giving a deer a long law he gets a long start, and that consequently a better run is likely to result, is not as a rule borne out by the facts, though occasionally it may be so. A stag either goes to look for a herd he knows of, or he loiters about in the next combe, and only begins to run when hounds are right on top of him. It has been noticed times and again that some of the best runs that have ever taken place have been after deer that hung about at every opportunity and never got far away from hounds.

Mr. Basset, in 1888, drew Beara Wood with the pack, and roused a big stag with three on top on each side. Half the pack were out of covert absolutely on his haunches, coursing him in view over the first field. Hounds were stopped and got together and let go again on Whitfield Down, and we sat down to ride, for there was a breast-high scent. The huntsman, Arthur Heal, led, followed by four ladies, the Duchess of Hamilton, the Hon. Mrs. T. Fitzwilliam and her sister, Miss Kinglake (now Mrs. W. A. Harford), and Mrs. Bellew, and close behind them half a dozen men, while after that the field was tailed out for miles. Hounds ran on without a check over Exe Plain across Badgworthy, and right away to Horner, and as the leading horsemen topped each ridge on the moor there was the

stag, with hounds not far behind him, on the ridge in front, and an ever-increasing interval between the leading horseman and the tail hound. This gallant stag stood to bay where a fender runs across Horner Stream, just above the Mill, in one hour and forty minutes from the find, the distance being nineteen miles. Fourteen sorely blown horses were gathered round, and it was a good ten minutes before another horse came up. He was a fighting stag who knocked hounds about a good deal, and that veteran stag-hunter, Sir William Karlake, who had gone well up throughout, had a narrow escape from injury in a gallant attempt to capture him. This deer certainly did not have more than five or six minutes' law.

Another remarkable instance of how a deer that seems inclined to hang about can go when hustled is afforded by the great Hawkridge run to Glenthorne, September 14th, 1899. The stag was pressed sharply by the tufters, but the moment they were stopped he went down to the Barle and soiled, trotted leisurely over Ashway Ham, soiled again, went on to Tarr Steps, following the water some way, and in the covert above Tarr Steps lay fast till hounds were right up to him. Even then, though scent was of the best, he did not seem in a hurry, for he went up to Lord's Plantation, looking for other deer, but, finding none, he went away, only just in front of hounds, over Withypool Common, and soiled in the big pool by Sherdon Hutch.

He only left the water when hounds were close to

him, and though he made a rather cunning double at the top end of Cornham Brake, and ran down the little watercourse till he was clear of the covert before he broke away for Dure Down, he did not get three minutes' start, and from that point to the Cleeve above Lynmouth it was a race the whole way. We had a check here which must have lasted five-and-twenty minutes, and had to hunt the water for some way up from Waters' Meet and lead our weary horses up a heart-breaking path to Countisbury Common, and even then the stag was reported only about ten minutes ahead of us, so that he must have taken matters very easily in the Lyn Valley. From Countisbury he ran the cliff path to Glenthorne, where he was killed, only nine horses being at the finish.

In riding to staghounds on Exmoor, or in any of the wild country round, it is impossible for anyone to keep as close to hounds when they run fast as he would wish to do; but it is still necessary to keep command of hounds, and be ready to get to them in an instant. Sidney Tucker, the present huntsman, a light weight, a bold horseman, and with an unequalled knowledge of the ground, seems to be able to go almost everywhere his hounds can go, a feat not lightly to be attempted by the uninitiated, and yet all the while he is looking ahead for what is his chief source of difficulty—fresh deer. So long as the pack are running well over the open it is all plain sailing; but there are favourite haunts of the deer, and one or other of these a hunted stag rarely

fails to visit, and in such spots as Clannacombe, Woodcock Combe, or Bincombe rarely fails to put up a substitute. Then, and not till then, the huntsman is wanted. He will watch the rising ground opposite to see if he can see the fresh deer—hinds in all probability—and will gallop on to get a look up and down the water in the valley. Then will be the time to notice whether the same hound brings the line out of the little combe who was leading when they ran in. The hunted stag may have lain down—he may have gone on in company with the fresh deer, or he may have soiled in the river and gone down stream, landing again lower down to turn out more fresh deer. Such are the problems which present themselves to the huntsman at every turn, and he has to make up his mind quickly, for an eager field is already arriving on the spot—a field of whom a large portion will only partly appreciate the difficulty; and another portion is desperately afraid of being left behind, and so is doubly keen to get forward at a check.

Next to fresh deer, water is the greatest difficulty a huntsman has to contend with, and it is in working the water that he can sometimes show the highest skill. Every hunted stag is certain sooner or later to "soil" or come to water, if he can find any, but the ways in which deer utilise the water to throw off pursuit are many and various, depending much on whether the stag is, to use the local expression, "properly run up" or not. If he is, he probably blunders painfully down the stream till he comes to some deep

water, and there either lies down or stands panting till his enemies catch a view of him. It is the stag who, without being blown or exhausted, has run just enough to make him think it is time he dodged his foes who gives the most trouble. If he can put up fresh deer close to the water he is exceedingly likely to go to the stream on the same line as the fresh deer, who will probably have gone across, and go down stream, leaving the fresh deer to draw on the hounds.

A deer will usually follow a stream in the direction in which it is going when he takes to the water, but it is a favourite trick to go only a little way up or down, land and run a ring on shore, and, coming to the water again, go in the other direction. This probably induces a long cast up or down stream. In casting along the water side it is well to keep some hounds on each side and some in the stream, for scent may often be found on an overhanging bough or on a stone.

Those who are riding by the water when hounds are being cast along it should keep a vigilant eye on all the dark corners under the bank, for a deer will lie still with nothing but his nose above water, and let hounds go close by him. Hinds are peculiarly clever at this, and the time they can remain submerged in an icy-cold stream is something extraordinary. This stratagem, when restored to by beaten deer, means, if unsuccessful, a kill in a few minutes, as they rapidly become stiff in the water.

It is wonderful what a long way a deer will go down the water without leaving a trace of scent, if there is a strong stream running ; so if there is good ground for supposing the deer to have gone down, it is never safe to leave off casting till some obstacle, such as poles across the stream, is reached, which will either cause the deer to land or is likely to carry a scent if he has gone over. The old hounds get very clever at water work, and they will swim along by a pole, trying for scent all the way. It is related of old Sailor, in Lord Ebrington's mastership, that he walked out along a pole to wind a splash on it, gave tongue loudly, and then fell souse into the river.

Much can be learned from splashes, for a splash on a stone may tell whether the deer has passed. In casting in the water the whip, or a trusty helper, should gallop on, watching the stream carefully all the way, to try for a view or to note other signs. He will notice splashes on stones before any fresh ones can be made by hounds. He may notice fish rising steadily in a flat pool, from which he may safely infer the stag has not gone through it very recently. A heron may be standing fishing—a fairly sure sign, but not absolutely to be relied on, that the deer has not gone there—wild duck quietly swimming on the stream is a much surer sign. With luck he may come upon the stag himself, or the wet splashes on the bank where he has shaken himself on quitting the water.

It is doubtful whether a hunted stag which has been

running twenty minutes or more ever, unless hounds are actually close on him, crosses a watercourse without availing himself of it in some way either to refresh himself or to embarrass the pursuers. A roll in a clear stream seems to put new life into him "when heated in the chase."

By the way, this hymn, "As pants the hart for cooling streams," which used to be regularly sung in every church in the district on the first Sunday in the staghunting season, is a curious instance of the way in which hunting allusions and expressions crept into our best literature from the time of Chaucer downwards. David knew nothing about the hart being heated in the chase. He wrote, "Like as the hart desireth the water brooks, so longeth my soul." In a hot, arid country this would be "understanded of the people," but hardly in England, so the words "when heated in the chase" were inserted by Tate and Brady in their version, published somewhere about 1700. Staghunting was common in many parts of England then, and the reverend poets lived at Richmond, where at that time the Royal Buckhounds hunted regularly, and where they must often have seen deer soil in the Thames and the Penn Ponds.

That no watercourse is too small for a deer to use was shown in the big run from the Punchbowl last year, when the stag on Molland Common, coming at right angles to the little water carrier, not more than a foot wide and only an inch or two deep, which

supplies Lyshwell Farm, ran up it for about two hundred yards before pursuing his original course.

Sheep do not as a rule trouble the huntsman much on the open moor in fact, they frequently assist him, for they pack together the moment they see a deer, and afford an indication as to which way he has gone. Although in an inclosed country they may follow a deer across a field, they do not attempt to follow one in the open for more than a few yards, so that, even if hounds find them on the line, a cast forward will always put matters right.

With ponies the case is different. They also will turn and watch a deer without following him; but, if he can find the ponies on the move, a stag has often been seen to follow them. We had an instance of this in 1903 with a stag which had run through Woolhanger, and gone away upwards towards Chapman's Barrows. The writer only beheld from afar off, but some of those who were nearer affirmed that the stag drove the ponies in front of him.

No one knows better than the hunted stag whether there is a scent or whether there is none, and he behaves accordingly. When hounds can only just hunt the line at a slow pace the huntsman's task is indeed a trying one, for the stag has then ample time to go whither he is minded to look for other deer, and to employ the thousand and one artifices of which he is a master to delay the hounds, who, nine times out of ten, are being pushed forward by an all too eager field. It is on such occasions that the

stag treats us to an exhibition of cunning of the highest order, and the huntsman shows us that hounds can hunt as well as run. In the course of the season 1905, hounds ran a stag from Horner at a fair hunting pace, by way of Chettisford Water, to Three Combes Foot and checked. They hit the line beside the bank and fence which separates Larkbarrow from Acmead, and ran it right up to the Alderman's Barrow Road. Here the deer had turned away and run parallel to the road nearly to Alderman's Barrow, where, after running a big figure of eight, he doubled back on his tracks, and, clearing the fence with a bound, went away to Swap Hill. As luck would have it the field had crossed the fence lower down to avoid the bad ground, and had ridden on into the road; consequently there were no horses to foil the ground close behind hounds, which worked out the figure of eight in faultless style, carried the line back to the fence, and, to use the words of Shakespeare, "picked the cold fault cleanly out."

They would never have carried it back through a hundred horses, and much time would have been lost in fruitless casts, even if the line had been recovered at all.

When hounds are hunting slowly or casting in the open, much harm can be done by the wings of the field pushing forward, so that the field is like a half-moon. A cast forward is, it is true, even more generally successful with a stag than with a fox, but it is just on these occasions, when hounds can only

hunt at a foot's pace, and when there cannot be any possible need for hurry, that a cunning stag will break back or away to one side, and if the huntsman finds it necessary to cast right or left handed he has to do so through a crowd of horses.

A beaten stag will lie down or "quat" (the old and still locally used term) just like a hare, and trust to hounds overrunning him. Especially will he do this after soiling, well knowing that if hounds miss marking where he left the stream they will probably work the water for a long way. A patch of blackberry bushes is a favourite place to quat in, and the stag will sometimes reach the desired spot by a huge sideways leap. A stag did this, and put hounds off for half an hour or more close to Horner Mill many years ago, jumping right over Lord Ebrington, when a hound at last pushed him out. On another occasion hounds were running over the enclosed country between Willet and Huish Champflower, a strongly enclosed district with big banks, each carrying a high thick growth on the top. Hounds checked in the middle of a field, and could make nothing of it. They tried round for nearly an hour, and at last, as they were being trotted across the same field where they threw up, a hound began to feather on what was obviously the heel line. He ran back to the fence where hounds had come over, slowly climbed the bank and pushed his way along the top, and there, right on the top of the bank, amidst the thick growth, was the stag. We raced him nearly down to Huish

Champflower, and killed him just as it got dark. He must have run to the middle of the field, and backed it on his own foil to the fence.

Guillaume Bude, or Budaens, who wrote in 1467, when speaking of the ruses of a stag to get rid of hounds, relates a story told him by the Grand Veneur of Louis XII. when he was hunting with him about six leagues from Paris. "The hounds, after hunting steadily would not hunt forward or heel. It was as if the stag had been bewitched and carried off into the sky. Then the marvellous discovery was made that the stag, jumping into a tangled thicket, had landed on a high whitethorn and sunk into its branches, and, not being able to disentangle himself, was thus supported and hidden in mid air."

Deer show extraordinary cunning in picking ground which will put hounds to the maximum of inconvenience. Stony tracks which carry little or no scent, and play the mischief with hounds' feet, have a peculiar fascination for them, and the persistence with which hinds will stick to the stony ground on Dunkery and Croydon is wonderful. The stunted wind-clipped furze from 8 inches to a foot high which abounds in some parts, notably on Grabhurst and on some parts of the Quantocks, is a sore trial to hounds, who can hardly get over it at all, and puppies have been seen to lie down and yell; but its virtues are well known to the deer, who never fail to go over as much of it as they can when any is near their line.

Many years ago the Earl of Lovelace planted Yarnor Moor with Scotch firs and larches, but the winter gales blowing straight from the Atlantic were too much for them. Some have died and some remain stunted bushes. There is hardly any noticeable change in the last twenty-five years except in the lower, more sheltered parts. The trees being hardly higher than the heather in most places, they form a most trying obstacle both to hounds and horses. They are consequently greatly beloved of the deer, who will beat backwards and forwards there for hours till hounds are wearied out and almost incapable of further effort. In dry, warm weather these old stumps of trees exude resin—one can smell it as one rides along; and that may account in part for the fact that, in the autumn stag-hunting season, this ground never carries a scent, while in the winter hounds will run across it as fast as the mechanical difficulties will allow. Here it is that one may most clearly observe the tricks that cunning deer can resort to, and the utter contempt they have for hounds, horses, and people when they know there is no scent.

To head or blanch a stag is one of those things which is exceedingly easy to do when you do not mean to, and almost impossible when you do.

A deer just emerging from covert, unless very hard pressed, is easily blunched by people rushing towards him, as a crowd of foot people often does. A woman waving an apron has before now turned a stag. Only a few years ago this happened. A woman ran to meet

a stag breaking away from one of the coverts near Hole Water, and turned him back at once. A few minutes afterwards he went up the hillside again, and successfully passed through a cornfield where two reaping machines were at work with their attendant men and dogs, all of whom ran and made all the noise they were capable of, but he had by that time made up his mind where he was going, and nothing could stop him.

It is next door to useless to ride at a deer to turn him away from a line on which he has set his mind, though one has seen a deer ridden off from joining a herd. A single person riding ahead of the deer in the direction he is going will probably divert him, as his natural caution forbids him to follow anyone, but all the shouting, whip-cracking, and galloping of a hundred horsemen will not stop a stag going where he has made up his mind to go.

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE TAKING OF THE STAG.

Undaunted in the whirling flood
To face his foes the Champion stood,
While all around him wild for blood
They clamoured, sink or swim.—WHYTE MELVILLE.

A SUBJECT often discussed is as to the effect of the wind on the run of a stag. The opinion of those who have had most opportunities of judging is that it has little or no effect on the direction a stag will take, though its effect on scent is quite another matter. It is also easily to be realised that on a still, breathless day a heavy animal like a stag is easier exhausted than when a cool breeze—Exmoor breezes always are cool—is blowing in his nostrils. One can tell that from the condition of one's horse after a gallop, and, judging in the same way, it would seem probable that against or across a light air is easier for a deer than right before the wind.

This opinion is shared by the writer of the "Master of the Game," in contradiction to that expressed by Gaston de Foix, whose work he was translating. It may probably be the result of his experience on Exmoor, as distinguished from that of Gaston de Foix

in the forests of France. Lord Graves, however, was of opinion when he was Master that Exmoor stags went down the wind.

A wind right astern is not so noticeable as a wind meeting one in a run, and therefore does not impress itself so clearly on one's mind, but the writer fails to recall any big run right down a strong gale. There probably have been many such, but the wind was not a point to attract special attention.

On the other hand, we have all seen hounds run their hardest, both after stag and hind, dead in the teeth of the storm when the wildest of gales were sweeping over the hills, and the deluges which fell upon us seemed verily to realise Lindsay Gordon's description, "Sharp spikes of rain and splinters of hail." Lucky is the man then who is clad in three-ply Melton or has a *real* mackintosh coat. The thin ventilated things that fold up and go in the pocket, or in a little bag on the saddle, are useless on those occasions. The rain drives through them like a sieve. Few who were out will forget the weather on the Dunster day in 1905. How the storm howled over the hills, and how the rain pursued its course almost parallel with the ground in blinding torrents! Yet a big stag, after going away down wind, swung round and treated us to a gallop of the best by way of Treborough Common, Lype, and Dunkery to Horner, right in the teeth of the gale the whole way.

When Lord Ebrington was Master there was an awful day of wind and rain on the Quantocks in

October. It was the day when two lifeboats were lost with all hands off Southport. The storm was so bad that a deer broke over the Stowey Road between the Master and the present writer, who were stationed not three hundred yards apart, without being seen, and it was not till a tufter (old Romulus) came up on his line that anyone knew a deer had gone away, and it was only by slotting him on the Stowey Road that the Master could tell it was a good stag. This stag led us the whole length of the Quantock Hills in the face of the storm, and crossing the Beacon above St. Andries it was a difficulty to keep a horse on his legs.

These were extreme cases, but many of the biggest runs will be found to have been up wind. A secure shelter, water that he knows, and, above all, fresh deer are the factors which in all probability have most to do in determining which way a deer will go.

Going up the wind must presumably give some slight advantage to the hounds, especially when scent is bad, but when there is a fair hunting scent it is so lasting, and lies so long, that it is doubtful if the direction of the wind has any appreciable effect as far as hounds are concerned.

The effect of the wind upon the existence of scent is quite another question, and upon this point opinions differ, but most people are agreed that any wind is better than no wind, and that due south or due north winds are less favourable to sport than any others.

One of the greatest enemies to stag hunting on Exmoor is fog. It does not often assail us in the

autumn, but in the winter it is fairly frequent. Occasionally there is foggy weather even in August and September, which greatly spoils sport. It is impossible to hunt when it is what the villagers call "dark out over." Unless the deer is viewed away it is not safe to lay the pack on. No one would know what was being hunted. Moreover, hounds would run right away from the best of riders on the open, and probably half the field would spend the night on the moor, if the fog lasted all day. There is nothing for it but to wait till the fog lifts, but if it does not clear by one or two o'clock hounds generally go home.

Once, after waiting at Yarnor Moor Lodge till a few minutes past one, the fog rolled up like a curtain. Arthur Heal had his tufters out in a moment, found a stag in Smallacombe, and in less than half an hour a large field were galloping for all they were worth across the moor, a very fast run ending in a kill at Stentaway Bridge. One well-known member of the hunt had a narrow escape that day from what might have been a nasty accident—his horse came down, and his foot was fast in the stirrup. Luckily his foot pulled out of his boot, and away went the horse with the boot in the stirrup, leaving his owner painfully running after him in his stocking foot.

"Is that the hunted deer?" is a question which is frequently asked in the middle of a run, when a deer is seen to break from a covert where a change was probable, with the natural corollary, "To halloa, or

not to halloo. That is the question." The answer is, "Don't, unless you are quite sure."

Pages have been written in the old books to enable one to recognise a beaten deer, and they are all true, and for the most part unnecessary, for they simply detail the ordinary signs of exhaustion in a large animal. Anyone can tell that a stag which reels in his gait, stops to blow with his head down, and then goes on taking no notice of anything near him is a beaten deer. What one wants to know is, which is the hunted stag when, at the end of forty minutes, two or three stags all break from one covert. This is by no means easy. Experience teaches those who are at the work continually, but it is next door to impossible to set down on paper any fixed rules. There are, however, a few things worth noticing. When a stag has run half an hour or more he is sure to be sweating somewhat; in addition, he is sure to have treated himself to a roll in the water; hence his coat will be wet, and probably muddy. This is not infallible, as deer will often take a mud bath to keep off the flies. All one can say is that a deer with a clean coat and every hair standing out separately is sure to be a fresh deer.

A deer which has run some distance hangs his tongue out a long way, in fact, as far as it will go. A perfectly fresh deer does not do this, though he may show the tip. But this, again, is not infallible, for a stag on a hot day will put his tongue out after he has gone a very short distance.

One has frequently been told of hunted stags foaming at the mouth, but the writer never saw more than just a few flakes of foam, such as a horse half in condition may throw. This would not be seen till a stag had galloped some distance.

It is rarely that one gets a good look at a deer at close quarters, and at three hundred yards minutiae are not observable. The only test, then, is the general action and behaviour of the deer. A fresh deer will frequently be seen to stop and listen to his foes, turning round to look before making up his mind what to do. A hunted stag has tried all his dodges in covert—he knows exactly what is behind him, and he goes right away to the point he has fixed in his mind. A fresh stag may be headed, but rarely a hunted one.

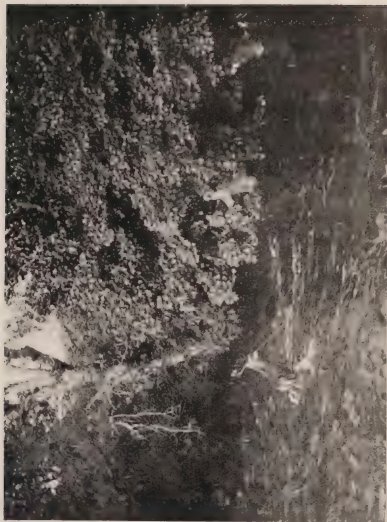
If one can see the slot of a stag one can sometimes draw conclusions from it. With fatigue comes want of elasticity, and the toes will be found much wider apart: the pace will not be so long, and the forelegs will be crossed more at each stride, while the dew claws of the hind legs will frequently be seen to have touched the ground.

When a stag, after a long run, is seen to attempt to scale a steep hill in a direct line for the summit, one may put him down as a beaten deer, and if there is a considerable stream at the base of the hill one may save one's horse by stopping at the bottom, being fully assured that the stag will come back again before long.

Water is the deer's refuge when he seeks to elude his foes, and to the water he comes when he has only strength left to fight for his life. In a strong stream, where he can stand while the hounds must swim, he has an immense advantage, and dealing powerful blows both with feet and antlers can keep off the boldest hounds; but it is to the water also that hounds owe their immunity from injury. They are knocked over and frequently driven under water, but the water yields and saves them from harm. It is on dry land as a rule that fatal injuries are received.

When once a stag is at bay, humanity both to deer and hounds demands that the closing scenes shall be as short as may be, and every effort is made, both by hunt servants and zealous members of the field—often at considerable personal risk—to “handle” the deer so that the huntsman may deliver the *coup de grâce*. This is done skilfully and well: the main arteries above the heart are severed, and insensibility and death result in a very few moments.

A stag with the velvet on his antlers makes little or no fight as a rule. He takes his stand gallantly enough, sometimes striking with his feet and dealing shrewd blows, but he always seems conscious that his head is not yet in fighting order. A lash of a whip thrown over an antler is sufficient to secure his head for a moment, and enable willing hands to reach the antlers; then all is soon over. As the season advances stags increase in strength and ferocity, and they will charge through and through the pack.



Head-lining a Stag.

and have been known to pursue a hound, striking and lunging at it. Then it is no easy task to handle the stag, and none but the strongest and most experienced should think of attempting it. When once cast on his side a stag is, for so large an animal, extremely easy to manage, as his antlers give an immense leverage by which he can be held down.

As a rule the stag is lassoed, both whip and huntsman carrying a stout, light hemp rope for the purpose. The quickest death a stag can die is if the pack can reach him in deep water, when they will drown him directly. An exhausted deer dies in a moment if his head goes under water.

In ancient times great precautions were taken at the "pryse" of a stag. Generally one of the hunt servants ran in behind and hamstringed him, or stabbed him to the heart behind the shoulder with his sword, receiving head and skin as his fee. If the head were now the acknowledged perquisite of the first who "handled" the stag there would indeed be a wild rush at the finish. As it is, the huntsman can always rely on plenty of skilled assistance, though there are few who would care to emulate the prowess of John Selwyn, the keeper at Oatlands Park, as depicted on his brass monument in the church at Walton. It is recorded of him that on one of the occasions when Queen Elizabeth went there to witness a hunt he vaulted from his horse on to the back of the deer and steered him with his drawn sword to where the

Queen was, and then leaning forward, he stabbed him to the heart so that he fell dead at the Queen's feet.

The late Sir Emmerson Tennant, who hunted Sambhur deer in Ceylon in the middle of the last century, used a pack of small hounds with two or three big savage dogs he called "seizers," who sprang at the deer and held him, a needful precaution when a man was usually single-handed. In his interesting book he records how he had on some occasions to receive a charge on the end of a big hunting knife, luckily finding the weak spot in the centre of the forehead, and splitting the skull.

Many deer take to the sea, when, if the weather permits it, a boat from Porlock Weir, Minehead, or Watchet will put forth and effect the capture. The brothers Pollard and their assistants in their white boat from Porlock Weir take many a deer in the season, and heavy indeed must be the sea when these gallant fishermen will decline to go out. A sovereign for a stag and ten shillings for a hind is the fee, and well it is earned, for it often entails several hours' hard work for six men. Still, the Porlock Weir boatmen are a race of true sportsmen, and they look more at what they consider the sport than what they get by it.

Between Porlock and Glenthorne the steep wooded slope of the hills ends in a line of cliffs above the rocky beach, but there are a good many places where both deer, hounds, and men on foot can reach the

seashore, though it must be confessed that boots and breeches are badly adapted for climbing. Sometimes a stag will stand at bay among the rocks, and often, if the sea is very rough, he will stand among the breakers facing the shore, a position in which he is very hard to capture, and one of great danger to the hounds, for when the rollers are coming right in from the open sea they keep the heavy rough shingle where they break continually on the move, and crushed toes and bruised joints are very likely to result. Between Glenthorne and the Foreland the hills slope down almost precipitously, with nothing but short grass and loose stones, from a height of about 900 feet to the top of the cliffs about 50 to 200 feet above the beach. A green path about three feet wide at its widest and some two miles and a half long runs along the face of the cliff—for the whole may well be called cliff—about 500 feet above. These cliffs are a very favourite place for deer to make their last stand: they run through the Glenthorne Woods and find themselves on this precipitous slope; they are too exhausted to get up it, and, pressed by hounds, they make their way to the edge of the cliffs. There are places where they can get down, and others where they cannot.

The most perilous position the pack can find itself in is when some are on the face of the rock baying the stag from above, others on the beach baying him from below. The position is not a nice one for men or hounds, for every time the stag moves he dislodges

stones which rattle down among those below. The writer remembers one occasion when a lot of hounds were hurt and one killed in this way, and the gallantry with which Colonel Bonham ran in under a shower of stones to rescue a hound that had been knocked senseless.

Much admiration was expressed on that occasion at the exploits of a stranger who ran about the face of the cliff as if it was level ground, and we afterwards found out he was a well-known member of the Alpine Club. The stag's end in these cases is generally a fall to the rocks below, resulting in instant death, when the body is pulled up clear of the tideway and left to be fetched afterwards, for there are only two courses open to those who are on the shore, either to plod over the rough, rocky beach to Glenthorne, or to scale the cliffs to the path above—no easy task, even when the lasso, or a string of whip lashes tied together, is available to steady one over the worst places. The latter is some help, no doubt, but is not to be relied on by welter-weights. To stumble over the rocks to Glenthorne is a weary job, especially if, as on the occasion mentioned above, an injured hound has to be carried. Those 26-inch hounds weigh more than anyone would think. The bearers tried carrying him in pairs, but the hound is an uncanny beast to handle in that way. Luckily a bit of wreckage formed a rough litter, and they got along better, but the tide was waist deep in places before Glenthorne was reached by a very wet and weary band.



Kill at Porlock Weir.

On one occasion a stag was drowned by the hounds about a hundred yards from the beach near Rodney, and Mr. George—there being no ladies present—stripped and gallantly swum out to the body, which was floating with the pack all round it, and towed it in. He was presented with the head.

Glenthorne House is situated at the bottom of a deep combe on a little bit of comparatively flat ground 100 feet above the sea, and twice deer have rushed down on to the tennis lawn in front of the house, and fallen over the cliff on to the beach below.

In 1884, after a very fast run from Culbone by way of the Deer Park, a stag stood to bay against the tennis net where Sovereign, who always ran at head, dashed at him and drove him to the thin line of bushes on the cliff's edge. Ere Arthur, who was riding down the combe from the high land 1000 ft. above as if he had a spare neck in each pocket, could reach the spot they had disappeared, and all he could do was to stop the rest of the pack.

The stag and Sovereign and two others lay dead on the beach. While Arthur, Mr. Turner, Mr. Chorley, and another were standing looking at the stag some ten minutes afterwards, there was a whimper and a rattle of stones, and a puppy faithfully running the line fell with a thud, luckily only just touching Mr. Chorley's shoulder, and lighted fully on the body of the stag. He lay apparently dead, but in a few minutes got up and lay down in the edge of the sea. Within a month he was hunting again.

In 1899 the end of the big run from Hawkridge took place on the same spot. The stag stood among the bushes and drove back the hounds, but they gradually forced him back, and though the Master and another just touched his antlers as he went over, they could not hold him, and one hound on that occasion shared his fate.

The swimming power of a stag is very great, and the buoyancy of his body is remarkable, for he floats very high in the water even when burdened with a heavy pair of antlers.

It is a fine sight on a bright autumn day to see a gallant stag swimming stoutly out to sea with the pack close behind him, giving tongue merrily, but it is an anxious time for the Master and huntsman. A prolonged swim in cold water, even though sea water, is by no means good for hounds after a long and arduous chase, and every effort is made to call them back. The puppies are in the worst danger, for they try to come straight in to the horn, and as the tideway in the Bristol Channel runs like a mill-race they sometimes reach the shore in a most exhausted condition, while the older hounds, who have been to sea before, do not attempt to fight the current, but come ashore where they can. As a rule the stoutest hounds turn back for the shore after four or five hundred yards, probably because they lose sight of the stag, which easily swims away from them. There was a most anxious time on the beach below St. Andries in 1899. Hounds had

run a stag down through the park and coursed him across a stretch of tide beach, half mud, half sand, and all entered the water together—indeed, it looked for a moment as if they had actually pulled him down, but he got away, and the whole pack were far out to sea by the time riders reached the water's edge. The tide was running up very fast, and stag and hounds were in the full set of the current. A horseman had some time before started to Watchet for a boat, and eager eyes were cast on the mouth of Watchet harbour, four miles off, for the boat which seemed as though it would never come. Stag and hounds were long out of sight from the beach, though horsemen a mile up the coast on the cliffs could see them. A few hounds came ashore and dragged themselves wearily to the sound of the horn. One hound could be seen straining towards a rock some five hundred yards away. He reached it and lay exhausted. Would the boat arrive in time to save him? The tide was lapping up round the rock and the boat was still a speck in the distance. Then the water gained and the brave hound struck out once more for the shore, which he gained amid general rejoicing. Then the boat arrived and soon picked up a couple or so of struggling hounds, put them ashore, and went on out of sight while we waited. It was nearly two hours since the pack had gone to sea, and it seemed hardly credible that any could still be alive in the water. Then we saw the boat returning towing the dead stag and with a couple of hounds

just saved from a watery death, and one which had been alive when rescued but was dead when landed, two hours and twenty minutes after they had taken to the water. Men were on the look-out for hounds for miles up the coast, and several were rescued, cared for, and sent on their way; but it was a very stiff and woebegone-looking pack which followed Anthony back to Bagborough that evening.

There have always been traditions that deer have swum across to the Welsh coast, a distance of about fifteen miles, and there is no reason to believe that a tolerably fresh stag might not do so. In fact, there can be no doubt that one stag actually did accomplish this feat, for they had a red deer among the fallow deer many years ago in the park at Dunraven Castle, which is straight opposite Porlock Weir. They never knew where he came from, and he remained some years, being eventually destroyed because he bullied the fallow deer. As there are no parks with red deer anywhere within a very great distance of Dunraven, it is hard to see where else the stag can have come from if not from Exmoor.



"Gone to sea."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHASE OF A HIND.

All along the plain,
To the low fountains,
Up and down again
From the high mountains;
Echo then shall again
Tell her I follow,
And the floods to the woods,
Carry my holla, holla!
Ce! la! ho! ho! hu!

JOHN WEBSTER and WILLIAM ROWLEY.

THE chase of a hind differs from that of a stag in a good many important particulars, but requires an equally high knowledge of woodcraft on the part not only of the huntsman but of all his assistants. Although many of the best runs in a season take place after hinds, hind hunting has never attained such popularity as stag-hunting, even among the regular followers of the sport—a fact which may probably be mainly accounted for because there is lacking that element of fighting which so often marks the end of a stag-hunt. A stag at bay and gallantly facing his foes has always powerfully stirred the sympathy and imagination of Englishmen. It was an appeal to this sentiment which Shakespeare

put into the mouth of Lord Talbot (1 Henry VI., Act IV., sc. 2, 48), when he says :

If we be English deer, be then in blood ;
Not rascal-like to fall down with a pinch,
But rather, moody-mad and desperate stags,
Turn on the bloody hounds with heads of steel
And make the cowards stand aloof at bay :
Sell every man his life as dear as mine,
And they shall find dear deer of us, my friends.

The ancient authorities are almost silent about hind-hunting, although the hind is expressly mentioned as a "beast of venerie."

There is also probably another reason for the neglect of hind-hunting ; she is, at least till well on in the spring, a much more difficult beast to kill than a stag, especially to a pack of hounds deficient in pace ; the gregarious instinct is much more strongly developed than in a stag, and makes her much more eager to join the herd. When several hinds have been on foot for some little time, and all are equally wet and dirty, the impossibility of picking out the hunted deer is likely to insure her escape. Moreover, at the time when these old treatises were written, the venison was still of leading importance in the minds of all, and a hind carrying little or no fat is very poor eating.

Gaston de Foix's commentary on some hounds which he commended throws some light on this : " Other manner of running hounds there be which hunt a good deal more slowly and heavily, but as they begin so they hold on all day. These hounds force not so

soon a hart as the other, but they bring him best by mastery and strength to his end, for they retrieve and scent the line better and farther because they are somewhat slow."

Such hounds might undoubtedly kill a fat old stag, but it is impossible to imagine such a pack accounting for a hind on Exmoor in the end of December or January, when they are at their best and strongest.

We know that until quite recent times the old stag-hounds did not hunt hinds from early in November till well on in the spring, until, in fact, they were in such an advanced state of pregnancy that they were easily killed; and, though the coldness of the water affecting the health of the pack is the chief reason alleged, one cannot help feeling that another reason they did not hunt was because they could not kill, and that these big, delicately bred hounds were unequal to the continued strain of hind-hunting; at least we know that Lord Graves deprecated hunting a young stag because it knocked up the hounds. If this was the case with a good pack, such as we know to have hunted Exmoor, how much more hopeless it must have been with the slow packs of old days!

The first difference that strikes one is that a hind is not as a rule harboured. An old yeld, or barren hind, may occasionally lie away by herself, but as a rule hinds lie, if not altogether, at all events so close that they are almost sure to herd together when roused, even though they may separate after a time and break covert in small groups, or even singly, and

then it would be impossible to tell which was the hind that had been harboured; moreover any full-grown hind—that is, three years old and upwards—is suitable for hunting, so that the prime cause for harbouring, namely, the necessity of selecting the best deer, is absent in hind-hunting. Some local farmer is sure to be able to tell the huntsman whereabouts the hinds are lying, and that is really all that is wanted. The only thing to be done is to rouse the herd, break it up, and lay the pack on the first full grown hind that goes away alone, or only accompanied by her calf. At first sight this would seem to involve much risk of chopping the calf. But in practice this is not so; the hind has never gone far before she makes her calf lie down in some bush or ditch, where it lies still even though hounds run within a yard of it. It may be one of the protective provisions of Nature that a calf in such circumstances has no scent. Certain it is that though the pack is laid on day after day close after hinds, regardless of their calves, it is an extremely rare thing for hounds to chop a calf, and usually when a poor innocent comes to grief it is later on in the run when the pack comes accidentally across a calf whose dam has not stowed him safely away. The calf by the middle of November, when hind-hunting begins, is quite able to feed and take care of itself, though it would probably continue to run with its mother till a new little brother arrived on the scene.

The existence of the calf has, however, a very

strong influence on the run of a hind and causes her, especially early in the season, to keep ringing round to the same country where she left it and her other companions, hoping no doubt in her mind that by transferring the pursuit to one of her sisters she may be left free to go quietly away and see to the well-being of her offspring. This desire, which is so strong in the first weeks of the season, wears off somewhat later on, as the calves get older and stronger, and then it is that hinds begin to run straight, and some of those wild, exciting gallops take place which make the lucky participators declare, especially if they have got their second horses at the right moment, that there is no comparison between the runs afforded by a hind and a stag.

On January 1st, 1905, hounds met at Challacombe and found a herd in Longstone Bog, at 10.55, the moor being dry for the time of year and in capital galloping order, but carrying a breast-high scent. Hounds raced almost in view back to Swincombe Rocks and round under them to Pinkworthy, where a single hind separated and hounds settled on her line. The hind turned northwards on to Lynton Common and sped away, by the well-known line of the "Lower Crossings," over Cheriton Ridge and across the Brendon road by Dry Bridges, and right on to the Deer Park. This was the luckiest line the hind could have taken, for there was a burning scent, and it would have been next to impossible for

horses to have lived with hounds if they had crossed all the bad ground. As it was, horses were so blown at Badgworthy that the Acting Master, Mr. Greig, and the huntsmen were thankful for their second horses. Hounds never checked a moment and raced straight away to Mill Hill, down Hawkcombe, and came to a first check by Porlock Church. The hind had jumped the big churchyard wall, about 8ft. high, into the narrow church lane, which brought her out into the centre of the village. Hounds were soon on her line and raced her down the road to West Porlock, when she turned across the vale and went to sea just before hounds exactly at twelve o'clock, one hour and five minutes from the start.

From Swincombe to Porlock Church is a $12\frac{1}{2}$ mile point, to which must be added for the turn from Longstone to Swincombe, and from Porlock to the sea about two miles. This makes $14\frac{1}{2}$ miles in sixty-five minutes, without allowing for other additions. It would be hard to find a gallop to beat this for pace, and it was small wonder that none but the fresh horses from Badgworthy were actually with hounds when they came to Porlock, though a few cast up afterwards.

This kind of run is, of course, quite exceptional, and the morte is rarely sounded over a hind before hounds have been hunting her, or her companions, for many hours. Though they begin hunting at ten o'clock without waiting a moment for late comers, it is more often than not that the short winter afternoon

is waning before hounds have set up their deer, and frequently they have to leave a deer they know to be dead beat in the coverts beside the Horner or the Barle solely for want of daylight.

As is usual when a herd of stags has to be separated on the forest, so in hind hunting tufting begins with a stronger body of tufters than would ordinarily be used for a stag, eight, or even ten, couple being often taken out, the intention being to insure that if the herd before hounds should break up—and it is a frequent thing to have twenty or even more hinds before hounds—there may be enough tufters available to press any hind which may be singled out, and go right on and hunt her if necessary. Whenever practicable, all the tufters are stopped, and the pack laid on as in staghunting, and the best runs are undoubtedly obtained in this way, but it is frequently impossible to do so without letting the hind join other deer, or get an undue start, so they are allowed to run on, and it is left to the smartness of the whip to bring up the pack when and how he can, generally at the first check. The stopping of such tufters as can be stopped, and transferring them to the right line, frequently entails some of the quickest, smartest work to be seen in the whole season.

On February 28th, 1903, hounds met at Brendon Two Gates, and a small field, who had journeyed far to that wildest and bleakest spot on the whole moor, were lucky enough to enjoy the best and

straightest run which a hind has given for many a long year past. Seven couple of hounds were sent to the Deer Park to act as a relay if needful, while the rest were taken westwards to Challacombe Common. A herd of twenty-five hinds were lying in the soft ground near Chapman's Barrows; they jumped up at once on the approach of hounds, and raced away through a downpour of rain to Sadler's Stone, where two hinds separated from the herd and went over "The Chains." The pack was stopped from the herd, and transferred to the line of the two hinds, soon disappearing over the impassable swamps of Winnaway. Riders kept on the sound going below, and crossing Cheriton Ridge had the satisfaction of seeing the pack swinging towards them and heading straight for Brendon Two Gates. The scent was good, and the deer only just in front of hounds as they came down to Badgworthy. Here the hinds separated and the pack divided, a few hounds running a deer which went down the water, and was eventually killed at Oare, Mr. Greig, who was acting Field Master, and Sidney being with them, thus missing the great gallop which those with the larger body of the pack were enjoying; but this is frequently the fate of the whip, and even at times of the Master when hunting several hinds. Meantime Mr. Sanders, with the body of the pack and the relay, was speeding across the Deer Park and Stowford for Blackbarrow, Luccott Moor, and Nutscale. Heavy storms drifted over the

hills continually, and to a slight extent diminished scent, but hounds ran fast till they came to the stream below Nutscale. Working down as far as Black Ball, they ran the line up on to Pool Plain, and down again to water under Luccott. It looked as if this gallant hind must be killed in Horner, but she went on down the water past East Water Foot to Horner Mill stream, which she left, and was viewed making her way up Parsonage Side to Webber's Post. From here she ran over Dunkery, and turned down to Anniscombe and Span Gate Gorse. Hounds had now run many miles, and very few riders were with them as this old hind broke away over the enclosed country between Wootton Courtenay and Timberscombe, coming to the Avill Brook below the village. From here she beat down the water past Knowle and Avill with hounds close to her. Below Avill Farm she turned up on to Grabhurst, but after running a ring round the ruined tower on Conegar, she dashed down the hill with the pack at her haunches into Dunster town, where she was pulled down right against the gates of Dunster Castle at 3.5 p.m. The time when she was first found was not taken, which was unfortunate, for it was a really great run. The actual point to point distance is eighteen miles—a distance rarely exceeded by these or any other hounds. To this a good deal would have to be added for the bend made to the Deer Park, for the sinuous course of the Horner Valley from Nutscale to Horner Mill and the visit to Dunkery, and in addition something by no

means small for the difference between the flat of the map and the distance travelled up and down in crossing the valleys. The head of this gallant hind is a treasured trophy in the possession of Mr. W. Evans, of Minehead, who was one of the small but happy band who saw the run from find to finish.

The fields in the winter are small, a dozen or perhaps a score ; but they are for the most part old hands at the game, and are able and willing to bear a helping hand when necessary.

In one respect the huntsman has a great advantage which is denied to him in the autumn, the leaves are off the oak scrub, and it is consequently possible on such places as Hawkridge, Cloutsham, and Wynne Corner to look down into the bare coverts, and watch exactly what hounds, and frequently the deer also, are doing.

The muteness of the pack, which is so frequent a cause of complaint in the autumn, passes away to a great extent with the hot weather, and hounds in covert fling their tongues as merrily as foxhounds, but when racing over the open they are certainly at all times deficient in music.

Those who go out to hunt the hind must make up their minds to face the weather, which is frequently very bad. Exmoor boasts a rainfall second only to that on the Fells of Westmorland, and the rain is not only heavy, but it comes with the force of an Atlantic gale at its back. When one of these storms is sweeping over the moor it is exceedingly

easy to lose hounds, as it is next to impossible to see or hear anything, and many horses are very bad to send along in the teeth of a storm. In staghunting there is always company, and there is, generally some enterprising person who sees where hounds turn, to the benefit of those behind him; but in the winter it is very different, one may often find oneself alone, or almost alone, with two or three couple of hounds racing hard and almost inaudible at a little distance. To live with hounds under these circumstances is a far harder test of a rider's hunting capacity, apart from mere riding, than anything he is likely to meet with when following the stag.

Were it not for the strong tendency most hinds have to come back to the place from whence they started, the riders present at the death of a hind would frequently be many less than they are at present. When hounds have met at Cloutsham it is the safest plan, if one is not actually with hounds, to trot quietly back to Horner about two o'clock and wait. The chances are very strong that one or more hinds, more or less dead beat, and eventually the hounds will come down the water. The same plan may be equally efficacious at Haddon or Hawkridge.

The Boxing-day meet at Cloutsham, in 1898, fairly illustrated some of the difficulties commonly met with in bad weather. As we rode over the wild brown summit of Dunkery we realised the full truth of the prophecies we had heard *en route*, that

" 'twould be a bit rough out over." "A bit rough" does not adequately express it. Up to the level of above 1500ft. it blew a smart gale, and the rain was heavy, about that level the hills were shrouded in mist, which, when we plunged into it, turned out to be close heavy rain driven before a hurricane which was almost enough to blow one out of the saddle. Pushing on we began to descend the north side, and as we emerged from the mist came suddenly on the Master and huntsman riding hard, while just below them seven couple of hounds were flying forward after a knot of deer, about ten in number, which were just visible on the slope of the hill towards Robin Howe. A hurried greeting having been exchanged, and having learned that the pack was at Cloutsham, but that they were "going right on," we hustled the ponies along down the steep path, for the horses we were to ride were waiting for us at the farm. Before plunging into the combe, there was time to notice that hounds were swinging round left-handed, and coming back along the slope from Webber's Post to Sweet Tree.

John Land opined "we should have to ride, as hounds were running terrible keen," and so they appeared to be as they went up Bagley Combe, and bore away left-handed for the mist-covered wet ground on Row Barrows. Three, four, five dark bodies showed about 400 yards in front of hounds. Anthony was close to the pack, while the rest of us toiled up the steep, heathery slope at the best pace we could

command. Hounds swung to the right on the hill-top, and, looking forward, we saw a young male deer galloping hard back to Langcombe Head. Anthony got to his hounds and stopped all but the leading couple, and as there was no chance of getting to them over the wet ground they were allowed to go chiming merrily on their way to the coverts beyond Stoke Pero. We were a party of five, and had five couple of hounds with us as we plunged into the belt of mist on the hill-top. We had come through it before down wind, this time we struggled through it up the wind. Hounds soon had a line near where the hinds had turned away from the male deer, and we were galloping once more. The ground on Dunkery is not the best of going, but there was no time to think of that or to pick one's way, for in the hurricane belt it was impossible to hear a sound of any kind; even the horn was inaudible about four lengths off when down wind, so that if one let the flying five couple in front get out of sight—a matter, at the outside, of 250 yards—there was a strong probability that one might never find them again at all. Coming out of the fog into clear rain, we could see to our disgust a couple of good stags going away in front. Luckily they turned short, so there was no difficulty in stopping hounds. Anthony felt sure the hinds had gone on, so he cast forward round Bincombe, and near the head of Anniscombe we saw about twenty deer in a herd; so hounds were laid on close behind them, and away we went once

more over the worst of the stony ground down towards Webber's Post, then short back to the left, and all along the ridge of Dunkery, right back to the wet ground. This was the best bit of the day, for though we were within the hurricane belt most of the time, the going is not so bad as in some parts. As a hard rider expressed it, "There is some room here for one's head between the stones, "with luck." Struggling through a belt of wet ground, we bore away right-handed, and came back to Sweet Tree. Here there was a momentary check, and we were joined by half-a-dozen more riders. Four hinds went one way and four another, hounds sticking closely to the second lot. Away we went over Dunkery again, into the hurricane belt and along the south slope once more. Just as we came to the road we met the hinds coming back, one of them lagging behind and labouring a little.

"That's the one we've been after all the time," said Anthony, as he cheered hounds on, and once again we were enveloped in the fog, hounds flying forward faster, if anything, than before. Turning short back by Row Barrows we once more had to flounder through the edge of the soft ground and sink the hill towards Sweet Tree, where we met our hind coming back, having changed her companions for four fresh stags. They disappeared into the cloud on the hill-top, and it was not till we had galloped a long way that we found we had missed the hind and were running out to the forest, so

hounds were stopped. Back again to Sweet Tree, where a little herd of six hinds could be seen standing in the gorse bushes. We laid on, ran across Bagley Combe and over Stoke Ridge as if for Stoke Pero, but we soon swung round towards Dunkery once more, crossing the worst part of the wet ground, where no horse could follow the hounds; in a moment they were out of sight and hearing. We pushed on, got below the hurricane level where we could see, but there was no sign of them; cast back through the fog and down the hill till we could see on the other side. There we gained tidings that hounds had just run hard out of Sweet Tree pointing to the forest, and that Mr. Evered was with them and Sidney close up. Anthony galloped on, distanced the rest of us, and came up with his hounds just in time to stop them off a stag; but by good fortune a hind was seen, what poor old Miles used to call "quatted" in the heather close by. She jumped up and went back towards the covert, rolling and labouring in her gait, and Sinbad got a view. It was a bad look-out for a beaten deer when Sinbad got a view. From here it was a race back to Sweet Tree and down the water. We pushed on past the farm across the meet field as fast as we could go, but hounds, running hard for blood, were before us, so we galloped on down the Horner Water till we caught sight of Farmer Adams's two labourers and an artilleryman running beside the stream; they stopped short and plunged in just as we rode up, for

Sinbad had sprung at the deer, turned her, and the next couple flying straight at her, rolled her over like a fox. Anthony was off his horse in a moment and the "Whoo-whoop!" sounded after a hard, exhausting run.

How long? Who could say? It was just twenty minutes past ten when we met hounds running on our way to the meet, and it was nearly half past two when we killed, and we had been running most of the time, though it would be impossible to say that hounds had been running this particular hind all the time.

The Master turned up just as we killed, he having enjoyed an exciting run with two couple of hounds by himself, pursuing a hind from Cloutsham over Dunkery to Anniscombe, and back over Dunkery, Nutscale, Luccott Moor, to Hawkecombe Head and back—a better gallop than we had experienced. The fact that he ran twice across what may be called the hurricane belt, close to where we were running, without our seeing or hearing him, or he us, speaks eloquently as to the state the hill-top was in. It was indeed "a bit rough out over."

A hind will practise every artful trick known to a stag, with perhaps even more cunning, but their main resource is to "seek change"; hence the persistency with which they stick to the coverts in places where hinds are numerous, such as Haddon and Hawkridge. This necessitates the utmost vigilance on the part both of huntsman and whip,



Two deer on foot. Listening to what's happening in wood below.

particularly the latter, to see that hounds do not change on to the line of a young male deer. Hinds seem to combine to drive a yearling away from them to meet his fate ; when, therefore, in such circumstances a single deer goes away from a covert where there are thought to be a good many hinds, it is of the utmost importance that someone should get a sufficiently near view of the deer to be able to warn the huntsman in case it is a yearling. Any single deer should be carefully scrutinised, as a half-beaten hind will sometimes slip away alone after rousing the other deer in the covert, and, if she does so unnoticed, will either escape altogether or obtain a very long start. This is, of course, the primary duty of the whip, unless otherwise engaged, and on running into a covert he would at once ride to a point from which he may best be able to effect this ; but it is a case where experienced members of the hunt may render much valuable help. If hounds get away on the line of a male deer it will probably save the life of a hind, for, even if the mistake is found out after a mile or two, by the time hounds have been brought back the hind will in all probability have slipped away, and, even if a line is recovered, no one can possibly tell whether it is the line of the hunted hind or not.

If hounds have the misfortune, as must inevitably occur several times in a season (no matter how smart the hunt servants may be) to run a young male deer and pull him over, it is a great mistake to save

his life and subsequently turn him out. If by any luck he can be secured before any of the hounds have had hold of him, he would, of course, be saved ; but as the bite of one of these powerful hounds is so serious that though he may, and, unless badly torn, probably will, recover, he is not likely to grow into a strong, healthy stag whose presence is any advantage to the herd and the sooner he is put out of his pain the better.

Sport during the hind hunting season varies very much from year to year, and depends mainly on two things, the weather and the feed, of which the latter is the most important. If the autumn keep has been good, and there are plenty of roots, hinds face the wintry weather in strong, hard condition, and if in addition there happens to be a big crop of acorns and beech nuts, so that they are well supplied with hard dry food, they never seem to lose that condition. The presence or absence of a plentiful supply of acorns is doubtless one of the causes which lead deer to lie in the neighbourhood of certain coverts in some years, and to go elsewhere in others.

The weather has, of course, a strong influence on the strength of the deer ; snow, which renders their food hard to find, being their worst enemy. In a severe winter, the boldness with which they will enter stack-yards and help themselves, within a few yards of inhabited houses is surprising.

The changes which have taken place in the practice of farming have, it is believed by many, contributed

not a little to the health and strength, and consequently to the fertility, of the hinds. It may be true, that at one time when corn was at what would now be considered famine prices, there was more land under corn than there is at present. The period of harvest, however, was not appreciably longer, so that there was not really more corn for the deer to eat, while at this period, as far as the rough hill farms are concerned, the turnip was an unknown crop, and the deer are far more dependent on their turnips, which are eaten later in the season, than they are on their corn for their winter reserve of strength. It is now the practice, as has been told elsewhere, to bring almost the whole of the sheep into the ingrounds for the winter, and consequently there are fewer mouths to compete for the scanty herbage on the moors and commons where the deer mostly lie, than when the sheep were allowed to run out for years and look after themselves.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FOREST OF EXMOOR.

"When the early dawn is stealing
O'er the moorland edge revealing
All the tender tints of morning ere she flushes into day."

WHYTE MELVILLE.

"WHAT part of the wild country which extends over so much of West Somerset and North Devon is properly included in the term Exmoor? And why is it called a forest when the greater portion of it is bare of trees?" are questions so often asked that it may be of interest to deal with these points, and, without going into any abstruse historical disquisitions, to trace briefly the history of Exmoor and of staghunting, for the two are practically inseparable, from the earliest times of which we know anything, and to see how the sport was carried on of old, how the dwellers in the district groaned under the cruel Forest Laws, and how, little by little, the exclusive privilege of Royalty became the cherished sport of the people of two counties.

For this purpose it will be well to define clearly the boundaries of the Forest of Exmoor at different periods, and then to see how, and by whom, the laws were administered, and what are the earliest traces

of the existence of staghunting on Exmoor, what the old books call "hunting at force," that is with a pack of hounds hunting by scent in contradistinction to coursing or shooting deer, which are sometimes included under the general term hunting.

Of the boundaries of the Royal Forest in Saxon times we have no records, but as so many of the manors surrounding the forest were held by members of the Saxon Royal family, it is probable that forest rights were exercised over a very large and indeterminate stretch of country, nor have we any definite information as to the boundaries under the earliest Norman kings, but from the presentation of the jury who made a perambulation of the boundaries of the forest in the seventh year of Edward I., we learn that a great part of the encroachment which then existed had been made by King John. The country over which the forest laws were then in force was bounded by a line running from a little east of Hurlstone Point, passing between East and West Luccombe to Couple Cross, near the "Heathpoult," and going, nearly on the line of the old Minehead road, past King's Brompton to the junction of the Rivers Exe and Barle close to Dulverton Station; the other boundary of the forest being coterminous with the boundary of the county. This included in the forest the parishes of Porlock, Bossington, West Luccombe, Stoke Pero, Cutcombe, Exford, Winsford, Exton, King's Brompton, Dulverton, Hawkridge, and Withypool.

The object of this encroachment is obvious, because all the best covers in the country and the favourite breeding places of the deer were thus brought within the "regard of the forest."

We do not know that King John ever hunted on Exmoor himself, but he frequently went to the Royal hunting lodge at Axbridge to hunt on Mendip. There is said to be an old folk-song extant in those parts, with a chorus in praise of King John—surely the only place in England where he ever was praised.

By the forest clauses of Magna Charta and by the Charta de Foresta John professed to abandon all his encroachments, but it was long before any effective steps were taken.

Two perambulations of the forest were made in 1279, one on January 4th, and the other in April.

The jury on the first occasion started from County Gate and followed the line of the present road by Hawkecombe Head to Alderman's Barrow, and thence by the line of the existing trackway to the road below Hill Head Cross and by Edgcott to Exford. From here the line followed the Exe down to Road Castle, and then proceeded by the track up to and across Room Hill, and by Comer's Gate and Wambarrows nearly to the old inscribed stone by Spire Cross, then "by the great way between the two Ashways" (how often we gallop that track in the course of a season) "as far as the water of Barle at Tarr Steps, and down to the Danes Brook at Castle Bridge. From

this point the boundary runs on the same line as the county boundary up to Danes Brook, past Hawkridge and Lyshwell to Willingford, and up Litton Water to Darliek Corner near the Sandiway Inn, thus leaving Anstey, Molland, and Cuzzicombe Commons on the left ; then along the line of the lane from Darliek Corner, across the Simonsbath Yard Down road, and over Span Head to Moles Chamber. From Moles Chamber the line ran across the Simonsbath—Challacombe road and up beside the track—which is the old road to Lynton—to Wood Barrow ; thence down the little water to Sadler's Stone—where the gate is now—and along the wall separating The Chains from Furze Hill and Lynton Commons to Hoar Oak, Brendon Two Gates, and Badgworthy Water. Down Badgworthy Water to Southern Wood, and up the steep hill-side to County Gate.

This included in the bounds of the forest most of the parishes of Exford and Winsford, and the whole of Hawkridge and Withypool, all outside this line being disafforested, but it excluded Brendon, Lynton, Challacombe, and all the other commons in Devon.

A curious footnote to this perambulation is worth being reproduced, as it shows how our liberties were purchased by hard cash, and how strenuously the officials of the forests clung on to their jurisdiction. It runs as follows :

“ Moreover all other woods which were afforested after the coronation of King Henry, grandfather to

the Lord King Henry, son of King John, were afforested by King John. And afterwards they were disafforested by King Henry, son of King John, when a fifteenth part of the moveable goods of all England was given to the said Lord King Henry for making the charter of common liberties and forest charter. And afterwards they were afforested by Richard de Wyrtham against the forest charter, to the great damage of the whole country where the Lord King has no profit."

Richard de Wyrtham, by virtue of his office as forester in fee, had been lord of the manors of Withypool and Hawkridge, and had been, no doubt, anxious to keep the strongest hold possible over the game on his own lands.

He had been succeeded by Richard de Plecy in the office of forester when the perambulation mentioned took place, and he seems to have upheld the acts of his great-uncle Richard; but the award must have been speedily shown to be wrong, for in April of the same year a second jury were called together, and they made another perambulation: "The sworn men of Exmoor went forward in this way." They began at Willingford on the Danesbrook, the Devon boundary, and went straight to Hocklestone on the edge of Withypool Common, and down to Sherdan Hutch on the Barle. "And so going down by the river bank of the manor of Landacre, leaving that within the forest straight to Stonhuste" (probably an upright stone just by the

gate on the Exford Road at the edge of the North Common), "thence straight to the Dermark" (probably the gate at the edge of the North Common leading into the eastern branch of Gipsy Lane), and so on by the lane to Honeymead Post and by Redstone, and down to the Exe; up Orchard Combe to the bend in the road at Spracombe Head, and along the road to Alderman's Barrow, thence straight to Black Barrow—there is a line of bound stones there still—then right on across Mill Hill to the foot of Lillescombe, by Robbers' Bridge, and up the combe and along the road to Fistones, which must have been at the head of Deddycombe, and so on to County Gate, and round by the County boundary to Willingford. This, it will be seen, disafforested the whole of Exford, Hawkridge, and that part of Winsford which had formerly been included, and all Withypool except Landacre Farm.

Landacre was a continual source of trouble, and the Fugels and Beres, who owned it, were continually before the Forest Court for enclosing and cultivating land. We do not know all that happened in those dark days, but we know them to have been a time of strife all over England between the foresters and the farmers, who complained that the foresters kept too many underlings who exceeded their powers, and extorted money and collected corn and lambs and little pigs, and in particular that they collected corn and brewed it into beer, and suffered no one else to brew any beer till the foresters had sold all theirs.

What particular form of tyranny Nicholas, the forester on the Porlock side, had been guilty of we know not, but John le Deneys and Robert le Deneys met him in the tavern of Roger de Cockereye at Doverhay, and beat him so sore that he died. Their free Danish blood no doubt resented the overbearing ways of the forest officer.

In 1298 Sabina Pecche being then the keeper of the forest, having succeeded her brother Richard de Plecy in his lands and offices, a further perambulation was made, and this put an end to the long dispute as to Landacre, for this manor was declared outside the regard, and the boundary laid down in a straight line—the line of the present fence from the Gipsy Lane gate by Picked Stones to Sherdon Hutch on the Barle, this being the only alteration made in the boundaries.

As to what happened between 1279, when the second perambulation was made, and 1298, with regard to Landacre, history is silent; but an exact story of what took place would probably throw some considerable light on the pleasant ways of the forester officers of those days, for from the list of "vills" situated outside the forest, attached to the survey of 1298, we gather that the troublesome and encroaching Fugels and Beres had by some means or other been dispossessed, and the land was held by John Herun, Richard Durrante, Adam Hustleigh, and the heirs of Geoffrey de Scolonde and Eorde de Feynes. The farm, together with all encroachments,

was now declared free from forest law, and this was *the only alteration* made by the perambulation. But it must be remembered that John Herun married Emma Pleey, sister of Sabina Pecche, the forester; that Avelina, another sister, was married to Thomas Durrante, though what relation he may have been of Richard we do not know, and that Geoffrey de Scolonde, whose heirs were interested also in the plunder, had been the husband of Emma de Wrotham, sister of Richard de Wrotham, the late forester, and therefore great-aunt to Sabina. It looks as if Sabina had brought off a nice little family job. Had there been a Commissioner of Woods and Forests sitting in the Commons in those days the Member for Somerset might have given him an uncomfortable ten minutes at question-time.

Picked Stones is a lonely farm, commonly believed to derive its name from the masses of white quartz rock sticking up through the heather close by. It is doubtful if this is the real derivation. It is one of the oldest and probably the only inhabited house, except perhaps at Simonsbath and the village of Oare, on the ancient forest as defined in 1298, and was then called Picotestune.

We find Richard de Picotestune mentioned as a surety valued 12*d.* in the forest rolls in 1270, and it is not a little remarkable that Christina, youngest daughter of Richard de Wrotham, who was forester in 1200, married Thomas Picot. It may well have been that the erection of a house by Thomas Picot

may have been connived at by his father-in-law, or afterwards by his brother-in-law.

It will be noticed that in all these surveys the parish of Oare is included within the bounds of the forest, and we do not know exactly when, or in what circumstances, it became disafforested. There are no more records of perambulations until 1651, when Parliament inquired into the property of the late king.

Jeremie Baines, Samuel Cottman, and John Harrock were deputed to make a return as to the Royal Demesne. The survey speaks of the forest of Exmoor as situated in the counties of Somerset and Devon, but although it recites the exact marks on the Devon side with great particularity, it is impossible to see that the boundary in any way differs from that of the county. Some of the names mentioned are difficult to identify, but so much of the line is clearly traceable that it is difficult to believe there was really any divergence. The boundary runs from Sadler's Stone along the line of the wall below The Chains to Brendon Two Gates, and down Hoccombe, beside the "Batchery Enclosure," doubtless the square bit of hill cut off from Brendon Common, then over Badgworthy and up Mighty Combe, not to be identified, and thence "forwards to the Three Combe in feete" (Three Combes Foot, a well-known point), and so on towards "Blaykbarrowe Topp. Where begins Sparlockes (? Porlock) Common, and so along over Blaykborrowe



Kill in Badgworthy Water.

Ridge to Owlaman's Borrowe, leaving Sparlockes Common which did abutt the said Chase on the East."

This puts the whole parish of Oare outside the forest, but the survey is simply declaratory and does not purport, as did the previous perambulations, to disafforest anything.

The area of the forest is stated to be 18,927 acres, 2 roods, 24 poles, and its annual value £473 18s.

The commissioners reported that it was "mountainous and cold ground, much beclouded with thick fogges and mists, and is used for depasturing of cattle, horses, and sheep, and is a very sound sheep pasture," but they reported that very little of it was capable of improvement.

The survey agrees practically with that made when the forest was sold in 1818, when it was found to contain 18,810 acres, of which $10,262\frac{1}{4}$ were sold to Mr. J. Knight, of Worcestershire, and the residue "allotted" to various manors and persons in lieu of rights on the forest which were extinguished. This is the explanation of the term "allotment," such as Porlock Allotment, the Acland Allotment, and numerous others, which when mentioned by way of directing a stranger from up the country to find his way home, have sent him wandering about the moor looking for a cabbage garden, and have been the cause of much regrettable language before the benighted sportsman reached his inn.

But to return ; Oare must have occupied a unique position from the earliest time, because it was apparently the only part of the ancient forest which was not " Royal Demesne," and in which there were any inhabited houses.

The manor was granted by the conqueror to Ralph de Pomerai, from whom it passed to the Kelly family, and from them through the Spurriers to its present possessor, Mr Nicholas Snow, to whose careful preservation of the deer the hunt owes so much.

Whether in very early times there ever was any hamlet or residence at Simonsbath is very doubtful. Tradition, indeed, speaks of a Saxon palace, but of this there is no confirmation.

Being in the king's demesne, and so free from taxation, it is not mentioned in Domesday nor do we find any mention of it in any of the Pleas of the Forest. It was a recognised name in the time of Henry VIII., for Leland speaks of it in his " Itinerary," and mentions a wooden bridge over the river, presumably a " clammer," which looks as if there had been someone living there, and in Elizabeth's reign we are told that Hugh Pollard kept staghounds there. Whatever there was in the way of enclosure or building cannot have been much, for in 1818 the total enclosure at Simonsbath is given as 108 acres.

Charles I., in 1625, granted, along with a lease of the forest, to Earl Pembroke " a further clause of

liberty to him to build a lodge in the forest at his charges, and to enclose and lay 100 acres of land thereunto." According to that the old enclosure can only have been eight acres.

With the exception of Oare and possibly Simonsbath and Picked Stones, the forest of Exmoor, putting aside the encroachments, was always an uninhabited stretch of land, and in this way differed widely from the other royal forests, which included farms and villages within their limits, and in consequence the forest laws, which were mainly directed against dwellers in the forest, pressed less hardly than in other places, but to the dwellers in the encroachments, who felt that they were wrongfully tyrannised over, they must, while still in force, have been specially odious.

Great tracts of land surrounding the forest were, as we have seen at various times, disafforested. They then became *pouralles*, or *purlieus*, of the forest, and were still subject to certain restrictions and disabilities. The foresters could still come over these lands to drive the deer back to the forest. The owner of a *purlieu*, or, as *Manwood* calls him, a *purlieuman*, had a restricted right of hunting. He might hunt a deer on his own land, and if found on his own land he might follow it anywhere except on to the King's forest, and might take the deer if he could, but if his hounds ran on to the forest and he was unable to stop them, he might not enter himself, but had to blow a "*rechase*" on his horn.

as loud as he could. This restricted right he might not even share with his neighbours, for, as Manwood says: "The purlieuman must hunt his own purlieu himself, and with no other company than his own servants, and not otherwise, for he cannot license any other person or persons to hunt there, because the authority that he himself hath is only conditional — 'tis a licence of profit which is strict, and cannot be deputed to another. . . . Besides, the laws of the forest do not permit a number of persons to assemble themselves together to hunt in the purlieus, because that is likewise *ad terrorem* of the beasts of the forest."

The purlieuman's rights were still further curtailed in many ways. He might not hunt at night — a wise restriction that prevented him shooting deer at feed — nor on a Sunday, nor out of season, nor more than three days a week, nor within forty days before or after the King's coming to hunt in person. The latter restriction made no difference on Exmoor, for, so far as we know, no sovereign ever hunted there. Charles II., when Prince of Wales, rode from Dunster to Barnstaple with an escort of Hopton's Horse, but he can have had little leisure to hunt. His present Majesty, Edward VII., also starting from Dunster, had a day on Exmoor, but he enjoyed a capital gallop from Mr. Snow's Deer Park out to Chapman's Barrows and back to Badgworthy, where the stag was pulled down. His Royal Highness, as he was then, was well up, and jumping into the water,

helped Arthur Heal to take the deer and draw him ashore.

However valuable may have been the greater freedom and ease with which he could manage and cultivate his own estate, it is clear that the sporting rights of a purlieuman in a country like that around Exmoor did not amount to much, especially when it is remembered that he was restricted to hunting fairly, which presumably meant coursing with greyhounds, or hunting "at force" with a pack of "raches." Nothing in the nature of "forestalling" was allowed—that is, using any artificial means of trapping deer, or preventing their return to the forest. Standing behind a tree and slipping greyhounds on a deer as it was driven by towards the forest was illegal, as being "forestalling."

At a Forest Court held at Somerton in 1364 it was presented by the forest officers that:—

"Robert Hacche, Abbot of Athelneye, and Henry, his brother, made a stable in a wood called Lefhangre and took one calf of a stag called unum boriculum servi (*sic*). Also they say that Nicolas Corun, Knight, on Tuesday next after the feast of St. Leonard, took, in the wood called Burrow Wood, near Winsford, outside the forest, one stag whose peace was proclaimed, and made a stable contrary to the assize of the forest." These, be it noted, were purlieus.

A "stable" was a stand from which to shoot when deer were driven by; it was in common use in

enclosed parks and when ladies were present. In Act IV. *Love's Labour Lost*, the scene is King of Navarre's park. Enter Princess, a Forester, and others.

PRINCESS: "Then, forester, my friend, where is the bush
That we must stand and play the murderer in?"

FORESTER: "Hereby, upon the edge of yonder coppice;
A stand where you may make the fairest shoot."

Nicolas Corun seems to have been guilty of a double offence, for he not only "forestalled" a stag, but he "forestalled" a stag whose peace had been proclaimed. One wonders whether he ensconced himself where he could command the spot at the end of Burrow Wood, where deer always break out to the Punchbowl.

The fact that the stag which was taken was one whose peace had been proclaimed cannot be taken as pointing to a royal hunting, as he would then have been called a Hart Royal Proclaimed, besides which we have no record that Edward ever journeyed as far as Exmoor. The stag had probably given a good run to someone holding a licence from the King. The record is only valuable as proving that hunting at force, that is with a pack of hounds hunting by scent—*odora canum vis*—was carried on upon Exmoor at that date. What we would like to know is whose hounds they were.

Mention has hitherto only been made of the disafforestations on the Somerset side of Exmoor, but

the condition of things on the Devon border was only slightly different. King John had proclaimed the whole of Devon to be a Royal Forest, but was compelled in 1203 to pass the "Charter of the Forest," which expressly disafforested the county of Devon "up to the metes and bounds of the ancient regards of Dartmoor and Exmoor."

"So that the whole of Devon and the men living in it, with their heirs and descendants, are altogether free, quit, and exempt for ever of the Forest and of all things that belong to the Forest and the Foresters so far as ourselves and our heirs are concerned."

The charter goes on expressly to grant rights such as the making of deer leaps, which are not consistent with the lands being accounted purlieus.

"Saving and excepting in the regions of the aforesaid moors," where they cannot have deer leaps or enclosures. "And if their dogs run into our forests we will that they be withdrawn thence as the dogs of the Barones and milites are withdrawn whose lands are disafforested and march with our Forests."

From this it would seem that the ordinary rules, such as those mentioned above which governed the sporting rights of ordinary purlieumen, did not apply to the men of Devon who had been fortunate enough to extract their freedom from a monarch who was utterly at the mercy of his subjects and had to accede to whatever they demanded. The Forest Pleas contain several allegations of illegal "hunting" on

Exmoor, the hounds coming from the Devon side, where, according to the liberties conceded by King John, the keeping of packs of "racches," or running hounds, was legal, whereas the Somerset men's offences are simply ordinary cases of poaching.

When one remembers the fact that, at the present day, there is a widespread impression in the minds of, one might be almost justified in saying, the majority of people that Exmoor is in Devon, whereas it is, as we have seen from the perambulations, in Somerset, it is not surprising to find that there has been an impression existing for hundreds of years that some part of Exmoor was in Devon; and so strong has this been that even learned writers, such as Mr. Rawle, incline to the view that some undefined portion was in Devon.

This case seems to be based on certain official documents which speak of Exmoor as in the counties of Somerset and Devon, and on certain entries in the Forest Rolls. It is an undoubted fact that the clerks and others who drew up documents were as hazy in their minds, in former days, as most people are to-day, as to what is in Devon and what in Somerset; for instance, we find in one of the Pleas of the Forest that Dulverton, which, beyond all controversy, is, and always was, in Somerset, is described as in Devon. We find in 1335 a presentation by the sworn jury of the various lords of manors who claimed common rights on the Royal Forest in

which the lords of Dunster, Wootton Courtenay, Luccombe, Bratton (by Minehead), Porlock, and Oare are included in the Devon list. This general uncertainty existing, it is not surprising to find that careful draughtsmen in London declined the responsibility of deciding which county Exmoor was in, and, as the lawyers would say, *ex abundante cautela* described it as in both.

The second ground, that of entries in the Forest Rolls, will be found on examination not to bear out the contention in favour of Devon, but rather the other way. The principal entry is given as follows by Mr. Rawle :

" They "—that is the forest officers, the verderers, and jurors—" say that Roger Ackelane and Walter Trommere caught and killed one calf stag within the Hundred of Wytherugge, within the regard of the aforesaid Forest of Exmoor, which regard is one and extends as well within the county of Somerset as that of Devon. . . . And they saw that all officers of the aforesaid forest in the county of Somerset undoubtedly have authority to enter that part of the regard which is in the county of Devon."

The word regard is sometimes used in two senses. Its primary meaning is the actual inspection of the forest every third year by the officers, called regards, who examined all encroachments, technically called waste, assarte, and purpresture, and saw to the lawing of all mastiffs, and

reported generally as to everything affecting the forest.

Their jurisdiction was confined to the territory within the metes, or meres, and bounds of the forest. Hence the word "regard" came also to be used as meaning the territory over which the regards exercised their office.

The inquisition, which is dated 1366, is headed, as is the case with all the inquisitions of which we have records, and they extend from 1257 to 1368. "Concerning the state of Exmoor Forest, in the county of Somerset"; further, it will be noticed that the presentment itself describes the forest as in the county of Somerset, but sets up a claim to enter that part of the "regard which is in the county of Devon." This looks like an attempt of the forest officers to draw a distinction between the forest itself and the regard of the forest.

It will be noted that John, when freeing the county of Devon, perpetuated certain restrictions as to deer leaps and such-like unlawful contrivances on lands which marched with the Forest of Exmoor. These restrictions obviously would be inoperative unless the forest officers of Exmoor could enforce them, as there were no forest officials in Devon having jurisdiction; hence it is suggested the claim was set up that certain parts of Devon were within the regard of Exmoor for these purposes. The claim with regard to the Hundred of Witheridge, no part of which is within many miles of Exmoor, and the whole

of which is cut off from it by the Hundreds of Bampton and South Molton, was absurd, and the court naturally made no order on this case, so that the utmost that can be said of this representation is that it is a claim upon which the court declined to adjudicate. But the case is still stronger. Throughout the century for which there are records of forest courts there are numerous charges against men of Devon, who entered the forest and committed offences in the forest, and in these cases writs were issued to the Sheriff of Devon to bring them up for judgment.

There are only three cases in which a man is accused of an offence committed in Devon. The first is in 1336, when "Roger de Cotecumbe found a stag in his rye on Molland Hill, which is two leagues or more outside the said forest, which stag the same Roger killed," and on this no order was made. The other cases are in 1365 and 1366. At that time the forestership had passed to Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March, who was a minor, for whom Richard de Acton on the first occasion and Guy de Brien on the second, each having futher deputed their powers, were officiating as deputies. No doubt these new officers acting for a minor were anxious to make the utmost of their power. In 1365 James de Andele, of North Molton—the Yandles of to-day are among the best sportsmen in the county—was accused of having his "park badly enclosed, so that the deer of the Lord King can enter therein, to

the injury of the forest in the county of Devon." The court made no order, no doubt from want of jurisdiction.

It may be noted that in 1267 Longwood, in the parish of North Molton, was officially declared to be outside the bounds of the forest.

In the next year we have the forest officers bringing up the case against Roger Ackeland and appending it to a specific claim to jurisdiction on which the court made no order.

A case which rests on a claim three times asserted, and on each occasion disallowed, cannot be said to be proved in the face of three perambulations, two in 1279 and one in 1298, which all specifically state the boundary on the Devon side to be coterminous with the boundaries of the counties, and one perambulation in 1651 which sets out the bounds in detail, and they prove on examination to be identical with the county boundary, saving that between the dates mentioned Oare had been severed from the forest of Exmoor.

The forest is roughly divided into the north and south forests, but where the boundary comes is not apparent; it is doubtful if there ever was such a boundary, but if there were, it was probably either at the river Exe or the Barle. The term north forest has come to be applied to a small stretch of trappy ground lying between Buscombe and the Brendon road; this seems to have arisen solely from the fact that it was on this unoccupied bit of the map that the

makers of the old ordnance survey chose to write the words " North Forest." In the same way they wrote " South Forest " across a tract of land near Winterhead, and these are the names they are generally known by to this day ; they have no other significance as far as can be traced.

CHAPTER X.

EARLY HISTORY.

Were the forester here now right
Thy words should like thee ill.
He has with him young men three,
They be archers of this contré,
The King to serve at will,
To keep the deer both day and night.

KING EDWARD AND THE SHEPHERD.

TWO main causes seem to have tended to the preservation of the red deer in the West, while in other parts of England they became extinct. In the first place the nucleus of the wild rough country which they have made their own consisted of royal forest, and, in the second place, the existence of a pack of staghounds.

On Dartmoor (also a royal forest), the deer were destroyed because of the damage they did to the farm lands in the neighbourhood—after the Dukes of Bedford ceased to keep staghounds at Tavistock, and a similar fate befell the herds in almost all the forests and chaces in the kingdom.

Gilbert White, writing of Woolmer Forest, where the deer had then recently been exterminated, says :
“ Though large herds of deer do much harm to the

neighbourhood, yet the injury to the morals of the people is of more moment than the loss of their crops. The temptation is irresistible, for most men are sportsmen by constitution, and there is such an inherent spirit for hunting in human nature as scarce any inhibitions can restrain. Hence about the beginning of this century " (the eighteenth) " this country was wild about deer stealing. . . . A late Bishop of Winchester, when urged to restock Waltham Chase, refused from a motive worthy of a prelate, replying, ' It had done mischief enough already.' "

It has never been alleged that the existence of the red deer on Exmoor had any ill-effect on the morals of the district, and it is perhaps permissible to suggest that the reason for this satisfactory state of things is to be found in the existence of the staghounds. In Woolmer and other forests the deer were preserved for the most part for the amusement of Royal and other important personages, and the dwellers in the district had no share in the sport, except, such as they helped themselves to illegitimately. In Somerset and Devon, on the other hand, where a regular pack of staghounds was kept, certainly as far back as the reign of Elizabeth, and probably much earlier, the whole neighbourhood was able to participate in the hunting, and the temptation to illicit sport was reduced to a minimum.

In the bad times between 1825, when the old pack was sold, and 1856, when Mr. Bisset took over the country, hunting was carried on in a spasmodic,

half-hearted style, and the herd of deer was reduced to a very low ebb. The poacher was everywhere at work, and it is a tradition that the bells were rung at Exford to celebrate the shooting of a hind. In "The Autobiography of a Poacher," John Holcombe, of Dulverton, who is still alive and well, though getting up in years, recounts his early misdeeds, and the open way in which poached venison was disposed of in Dulverton. Mr. Thornton, in his book already alluded to, states that there were on the Exmoor side of the country in 1848 about thirty deer all told, and perhaps as many more on the Dulverton side; but as the fortunes of staghunting revived, the poacher ceased his work—public opinion was too strong for him—and the deer began once more to increase and multiply, till the herd now can only be numbered in hundreds.

The history of the West Country, from a hunting point of view, would be singularly interesting if it could be set out in detail, but the materials are very slight, permitting us only to note from time to time details of some long forgotten person or event, from which we may gain some slight insight into the life of the inhabitants of the districts, and the changes that came over them.

Presumably the forest of Exmoor belonged to the Crown, and the Saxon kings made it a royal forest, that is to say, a stretch of country where the game, particularly the red deer, were preserved under the sanction of the forest laws.

We have no means of knowing the exact boundaries of the forest at this time, but when William the Conqueror annexed it with all the other "ancient forests"—that is forests that were accounted as such in the reign of Edward the Confessor—he was also in possession of Porlock, Winsford, Nettlecombe, and the other possessions of the Saxon kings. The forest of Exmoor, being *dominium regis*, is not included in the Domesday survey which was made for taxation purposes only, but we find from that source that the manor of Withypool was held at the time of the Conquest by Dodo, Ulmar, and Godric, who are described as "three foresters of Exmoor," and the land was adjudged to be thaneland, held direct of the Crown, as was also land held by Dodo in Winsford, probably the farms of Worth and Westwater.

These lands William seized and bestowed them on one D'Auberville or D'Odburville, one of his servants, on whom he also conferred the King's Park and the office of forester of the royal forest at Petherton.

The name occurs in the list of those to whom the Conqueror granted lands, after the names of all the churchmen and great nobles. "D'Auberville et alii servientes." William rewarded a number of his servants with manors in Somerset. To Humphrey his Chamberlain he granted Curry Rivel and Curry Malet; Hugh Butler, the King's Cup Bearer, held lands near Stoke Courcy under the de Courcys; John the

Porter held Chilton Trivet, Hemstile, and Idstock, between the Quantocks and the river Parret; Ansgar, the cook, had the manor of Lilstock; while Ansgar Focarius, or the hearth keeper, was granted lands in Petherton and at Durleigh. What office did Robert D'Auberville hold? We know that he was granted the lands belonging to the Saxon foresters, and that he held them directly from the King in grand serjeanty, the service being the forestership of Exmoor and Petherton; it is a fair inference that he held the important office of royal huntsman, even if not the more important office of master of the game.

These same lands at Hawkridge and Withypool together with the hereditary forestership were subsequently, in 1199, given to a Kentish man, William de Wrotham, who seems to have been the king's chief forester for all the forests in Somerset and Dorset.

The de Wrothams, from whom are decended the families of Wrothe and Worth, held large estates, and occupy a prominent part in the sporting chronicles of the West of England.

William de Wrotham was succeeded in his estates and offices by his son William, who, being Archdeacon of Taunton, deputed his brother Richard to act for him. He was succeeded by his nephew Richard, who died without issue in 1251, when the forestership devolved on William de Placetis, or de Plecy, whose father, Hugh, had married Muriel de Wrotham, Richard's sister. He in turn was

succeeded by Richard de Plecy, who died without children in 1289, and the forestership devolved on his sister Sabina, who in 1307 married Nicholas Pecche. She was followed by her son Nicholas Pecche and her grandson Mathew Pecche, who in 1337 sold the estates and the office of forester in fee to Sir Richard d'Amori, who paid a fine to the Crown of £20.* Sir Richard d'Amori sold a life interest to Mathew de Clevedon, and subsequently to Roger Beauchamp, who transferred the whole interest to Roger Mortimer, Earl of March, in 1359. This terminated what may be called the first period of the history of Exmoor. This was a stirring and troublous period of history, not only round Exmoor, but over the whole of England. The iron hand of the Norman had closed down on the land, and in respect of nothing with more ruthless tyranny than with regard to the game in the Royal forests.

Incidentally, it may be mentioned that the word forest does not necessarily imply trees, though Manwood seems to hold the opinion that covert for deer is essential to a forest—it means a place where fierce, wild animals, particularly deer, had special protection by law.

With the exception of a few quite modern plantations, there are not, and probably never were, within the bounds of the forest of Exmoor, as determined

* It is worthy of note that at about the same period the Pecches sold Beaurepaire, in Hampshire, to Sir Bernard Brocas, the hereditary Master of the Royal Buckhounds.

by the perambulation of 1298, any woods at all, and this is specifically stated in an affidavit filed in 1622 in an action regarding sheep trespassing on the forest. Walter Dollen, husbandman of Stoke Pero, deposed : "That there are no woods nor copses other than one oake called Kite Oake and a few thornes growinge here and there within the saide Forest, nor any other shelter for deere other than sedgebusshes, rush-busshyes, fearnes, heath, or such like."

The Kite Oak was, no doubt, on Kittuck, the green enclosure over which the field hardly ever rides, between Manor Allotment and the head of the Chalk Water. This absence of covert in the true forest itself probably partly occasioned the continued attempts on the part of the Crown and the foresters to include within the "regard of the forest" the immense coverts in the surrounding district.

The forest laws imposed by the Norman Kings were brutally cruel. Death, loss of eyes, limbs, and other mutilations were the penalties exacted for the crime of interfering with the King's red deer; some of the Kings mitigated the severity of the law, but they exacted ruinous fines coupled with imprisonment.

The organisation of a Royal forest was a very complete arrangement, and ensured not only the safety of the game, but the collection of a good deal of revenue, and the existence of a large body of men, serving directly under the Crown, whose duties would enable them to see and hear all that was

going on in the district. The chief forest officers were :

The forester in fee, who had general charge, and was responsible for seeing that the other officers did their duty. He made his report to the King's Justices in Eyre when they came into the county to hold the forest courts. These in the county of Somerset seem to have been held mostly at Ilchester and Somerton.

The forester's badge of office was a horn, which he delivered on bended knee to the justice at the forest court, receiving the same back on payment of a fee of 6*s.* 8*d.*

Under the forester in fee were "riding foresters" and "foresters on foot," to each of whom was awarded a district or beat. They were to be as many as necessary, but not more so. The allowance of Exmoor seems to have been one "riding forester," whose duty it would be to pilot the king, or other chief personage, when out hunting, his pay being £6 16*s.*, and two men on foot, who drew £4 11*s.* between them.

Verderers were officers whose special province it was to look after all coverts, woods, and what they call in the West Country "green meat"—to see, in fact, that nothing was done to decrease the food and shelter of the deer. They were judicial officers, elected by the freeholders, and presided at the courts of Swanimote, held three times a year on the forest. Here they inquired into offences *de viridi*, or

committed the offenders for trial at the forest court, taking sureties for their attendance. The principal offences were waste, that is cutting down woodlands or burning heather; the more serious offence of assarte, which consisted of grubbing up woodlands or heath, so that they would never grow again, and cultivating the land; and purpresture, or enclosing a piece of ground.

As examples of these three kinds of offence we find in the rolls of 1257 :

“Putteford Wood is wasted of old by Gervaise Juans, who is dead, and Adam Juans, half a mark, now holds it, therefore he is in mercy half a mark.

“From Warinne de Seccheville for old waste in Oare wood half a mark.

“From Hillary de Munceaus for old waste in Ashway wood half a mark.

“From Walter de Sydenham for old waste in Sydenham wood half a mark.”

It was customary for the Crown to acquiesce in an old waste and allow the offender to continue to cultivate it on payment of a fine at each court. Compare the following :

“From John Parson, of Hawkridge, for sowing one acre and a half once with rye and twice with beans 3s. And because he made this assarte newly without warrant, therefore he is in mercy and the land is taken into the hand of the Lord King.

“Hameline le Fugel and Henry le Fugel and Matilda de la Bere made of old a certain purpresture

of one acre at Long Acre (Landacre) in the demesne of the Lord King, and it was sown once with rye and twice with beans.

"From the same for nine acres sown with beans and three acres with rye, 7*s.* 6*d.*

"From the aforesaid Hameline for one acre of meadow occupied in three regards 3*s.* (occupied for nine years)."

To be "in mercy" is to be fined.

The foresters were practically gamekeepers, and they presented at the forest courts offences against the venison of the Lord King.

In the record of the same forest court quoted from above we find:

"It is presented by the foresters, and by Adam de Joans, half a mark, and Robert de la Sterte, 4*s.* verderers (the amounts of money being the amounts of their securities), that on Thursday next after Epiphany, year thirty-seven (1253), Oliver de Tracy, Walter his son, Henry Peet, and Hugh le Waleys entered the forest with greyhounds with the intent of wrongful hunting, but took nothing. And they have not come now, and were not attached because they belonged to Devonshire and immediately fled."

These Tracys were continually giving trouble by poaching. They occupied the old manor-house at Bremridge, close to Castle Hill. They were outlawed and the four townships nearest where the crime was committed were fined. Ashway 4*s.*, Exford

half a mark, Almsworthy half a mark, and Doverhay half a mark.

It is noticeable that Ashway, now a single farm, is treated as a separate township, and that Withypool is left out, probably because William de Plecy, the forester, was lord of the manor and would have had to find most of the fine.

He could not always escape in the same way, for the same record shows that one William Herlewyne and three companions caught a stag in Hawkridge Wood in 1249, and took him away to Braunton. Not being found he was outlawed. "An inquisition was made on the stag by four townships, Hawkridge 4s., Dulverton 5s., Winsford half a mark, and Withypool 4s., which could find out nothing else thereof. And because they did not come in full, etc., therefore they are in mercy," which means were fined accordingly.

In 1270 we find the Tracys again at work, and apparently Thomas Tracy, who died before he could be caught, and "his men whose names are unknown, roused a stag within the liberties of the County of Devon," probably in Bremridge or Hache Wood or Syndercombe, and ran him over Molland Common—just as hounds do from those coverts to-day—"and killed him within the covert of Hawkridge without warrant and carried away that venison to the house of Henry Tracy at Tavistock; who knowingly harboured them with the same venison. The same Henry has not come nor was he attached; therefore

the sheriff is commanded to cause him to come in the Octaves of Holy Trinity. There would have been no offence in this case had they not entered Hawkridge Wood, which was in the forest. If they had stopped their hounds in the Danes Brook they would have been quite safe, being up to that point in Devon.

Thomas le Shetere, of Grutte, in Molland, and William Wyme, of Bremley, were at the same court presented for frequent poaching with bows and arrows "and were harboured in the house of John, then chaplain of Hawkridge, who consented to their evil deeds." The chaplain came and was kept in prison, and the usual procedure of ordering the sheriff of Devon to bring the others and fining the township was gone through, Dulverton, Ashway le Erceneske (Ashwick), and the Prior of Taunton were fined.

"And the aforesaid John the chaplain is pardoned for the sake of the King's soul."

John Scrutenger, of Cloutsham, killed a hind in Witsunweek, which must have been in the fence month, when she can have been quite unfit to eat, and suffered imprisonment and paid forty shillings for his release, a very heavy sum in those days.

The records contain numerous instances which show how vigilantly and rigorously the laws were executed, for instance, in 1269, Richard of Dumesley of Anstey (probably Dunsley Mill), and others

hunted for three consecutive days on the forest, and were not caught, and the record goes on :

"And because the aforesaid wrongdoers were in the same place for so long, and William de Plesset, forester of the fee, neither took them nor raised a cry, nor his foresters, therefore it is to be judged about him and his foresters." We do not know what happened to them, but probably things were made very unpleasant for them.

The regarkers of the forest were officers appointed locally to make "regard" of or inspect the forest every third year, to inquire into the actions of the verderers and foresters, to see that everything had been done as it should be done, and specially to report on timber trees, eyries of hawks, mines and minerals, to the justices of Eyre. In Eyre is the shortened form of an itinere or on circuit. An important part of their duty also was to see to the "lawing of dogs"—by dogs are meant mastiffs.

"Buddæus calleth a mastiff molossus, and in the old British language that, and all other barking curs about houses at night, were called masetheses, because they maze or fright thieves from their masters." Manwood in his treatise on forest laws goes on to argue that the word "canis" or "dog" refers only to mastiffs, and not to "greyhounds or little dogs like spaniels." Manwood describes the method of "lawing" them as follows: "The mastiff being brought to set one of his forefeet upon a piece of wood of 8in. thick and 1ft. square, then one with

a mallet, setting a chisel of 2in. broad upon the three claws of his forefoot, at one blow doth smite them clean off, and this is the manner of expeditating mastiffs."

When one looks at the mastiffs upon the show bench at the present day, it is difficult to think that they can ever have been any serious danger to an unwounded deer; but the mastiff of old days was probably a very different animal, and the term probably included the big prick-eared brutes described as "alaunts," by Gaston de Foix.

There were also officials called agisters, who attended to the agistment of cattle on the forest, and collected the money. They were in later times the most important officers of the forest.

These officers were common to all Royal forests, but Exmoor had a custom of its own. The head forester had the assistance of the fifty-two free suitors of Withypool, who must have comprised the major part of the population. Old records contain many mentions of the free suitors, but the best account of them is in a memorandum attached to a survey of the forest, made by commissioners in 1651, as being part of "the demesne of Charles Stuart, late King of England."

"Memorandum. That there are fifty-two free Suitors which are freeholders or coppieholders, and some leaseholders, within Withypoole and Hawkrige, which do hold their lands of lords of several mannors which do claime and are presented by a

jury of themselves that they have enjoyed time out of mind in respect of divers services they are to do, for and in respect of the said Chase.

"Liberty and freedom and right to depasture in any place or places of the said Forest seven score (140) sheep at all times of the year at their pleasure, and five mares and colts and so many cattle as they may winter upon their tenements.

"And that they may cut, take and carry away turf, heath and fern upon the said forest, so much as they shall burn upon any of their tenements.

"And that they may fish in any of the rivers within the same. And that they are thereby freed from services at Assizes and Sessions, and to pass toll free in all fayres and markets.

"In consideration whereof the said fifty-two free Suitors are to do suite to the said Courts, and are payneable upon non-appearance three shillings, fourpence, or more at the stewards' pleasure.

"The said fifty-two Suitors are also to drive the said Chase nine times in every year or oftener, if thereunto required" (this is to see that no beasts were unlawfully agisted there), "and they are to do the said service on horseback, and none to be excused, except his wife be in travell with child, or that they have laid their dow to leaven to be baked that day, and such persons are thereupon excusable for that time only.

"The said fifty-two Suitors are also to serve upon the Coroners' Inqueste for any casualty

happening within the confines and liberty of the said Chase."

This memorandum is curious, and explains a good deal of local history. The inhabitants of Withypool undoubtedly acted as agents of the foresters from the earliest times down to quite a late date, and the King's Pound, in which stray cattle were impounded, was situated there, just to the left of the bridge opposite the village. The two enclosures are now the property of Mr. Robert Milton. Strange stories are told of the men of Withypool and Hawkridge, and of their lawless ways in days gone by, and there is little doubt that, acting for the forester in all matters of agistment of cattle, their hands were against every man's and every man's hands against them.

All sheep found unshorn on the forest, after a certain date, were liable to be driven in to Withypool and sheared there, the fleeces going to the forester. This, no doubt, was the origin of the rhyme :

Steal the sheep and sell the wool,
Ring the bells of Withypool.

The free access to the forest and the right of fishing, which they undoubtedly possessed, may have been the origin of a certain laxity of view with regard to game and fishing rights, which was said at one time to be characteristic of the inhabitants of both villages. The abolition of the rights mentioned in the memorandum when Exmoor was disafforested

without any adequate compensation—the lord of the manor and some principal freeholders got something, but the small “suitors” got nothing—is a subject on which the older men will still wax eloquent.

With this force at his command, the Norman forester in fee ruled the district with a rod of iron. The period was one of continual friction concerning forest laws between Crown and people, not only in Somersetshire, but all over England. There was continual encroachment by the Crown met by continual protest, and the struggle continued with varying fortunes till the beginning of the thirteenth century.

The great victory was won when John was forced at Runemede to sign the *Carta de Foresta* and the forest clauses of the *Magna Carta*; but then ensued a long period in which the force of sheer inaction was opposed to the demands of the people, and it was not, in the case of Exmoor, till 1298 that a satisfactory perambulation of the forest was made and the encroachments declared free of forest law, and how many years after that it was before the award was actually put in force we do not know, but certainly it was many years, probably only a short time before the Black Death, sweeping over England, changed the whole state of country life, an event which happened shortly before the forestership passed from the descendants of de Wrotham to the Mortimers.



Taking the Tufters to covert, by Whitestones.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FACE OF THE COUNTRY.

I view each well-known scene,
Think what is now and what hath been,

SCOTT ("The Lay of the Last Minstrel").

WE have glanced shortly at the history of the district, its forest rulers, at the severe laws which were enforced, and we cannot help wondering who were the people living in the district, where and how they lived, what the face of the country looked like in those troubled times, and what actual changes have taken place to bring it to its present condition.

A most cursory glance at the old records leads at once to the conclusion that the population was much greater than, looking at the present state of the country, might at first sight seem probable; that while the chief villages were smaller, the outlying hamlets contained many more inhabitants than at a later period.

Our principal means of information are the Domesday Survey and the Pleas of the Forest quoted from above. The first contains a list of manors and their holders with the numbers of bordiers, villeins,

and serfs, and also an estimate of the cultivated land and the number of plough teams.

It might be supposed that from this it would be possible easily to arrive at an actual acreage, and also at the number of inhabitants, but that is not so. The survey was made for the purposes of taxation only, and the estimate of area in hides and carucates, &c., is merely an assessment, a basis of taxation, while all non-taxable lands, such as royal demesnes and other holdings, are omitted.

What we can arrive at safely is the conclusion that every portion of the country round Exmoor was the subject of ownership, and was in more or less effective occupation. The list of manors shows the existence of every modern village and also of a great number of the small hamlets and outlying farms.

The Pleas of the Forest contain lists of verderers, jurors, and other persons with their residences, and from them we can identify a great proportion of the names. There are about 140 different place names, mostly villages and farms; of these 105 are well known to-day, and probably most of the others could be identified with a little research.

Although one cannot expect to make anything like an accurate estimate of the total number of inhabitants of the district, we can gain some insight from Domesday into the distribution of population. At Doverhay, for instance, there were, according to the Exeter copy of the Domesday Survey, a manor-house—now restored by Mr. Chadwyck Healey, K.C.,

and used as a reading-room—two villeins and one bordier; at Porlock a manor-house—where Court Place stands now—six villeins, three bordiers, and six serfs; making the usual allowance for families this would give a total population of about a hundred, very much less than at present. At Oare there was the manor held by Ralph de Pomerie (ancestor of a good Devonshire family still existing), seven villeins, five bordiers, and four serfs, or a total of eighty-five, which is about the number of present inhabitants.

At Winemersham, now called Wilmersham, there was land for five plough teams, and there were also 200 acres of pasture, five villeins, three bordiers, and three serfs, or a population of sixty; Wilmersham now contains one farm and a small cottage. Wilmersham was of sufficient importance to be fined as a "township" in 1280, for not being represented at the inquest on Andrew the Fuller of Porlock, who was struck on the head by Henry the Chaplain "with a certain stick in that tithing who forthwith died." This is the second murder in the district in that turbulent year, the other victim, as mentioned above, being one of the foresters.

Bagelie is now only the name of the combe at the head of Sweet Tree, but in Doomsday there was a manor there granted by the Conqueror to his favourite, Roger de Courcelle; one Cafo held it of Roger; he was the old Saxon who held it in the time of King Edward, and he had two bordiers and some villeins.

There was one ploughland and thirty acres of pasture, and one cannot help wondering whether this is not represented by the old enclosure at Sweet Tree, now mostly overgrown with bracken and furze, for the grass here is of fine quality and forms a striking contrast to the rest of the rough ground around.

Old Ashway is a solitary farmhouse on the way down from Winsford Hill to Tarr Steps, where Mr. Parkman looks after Sir Thomas Acland's ponies, yet in Doomsday we find it held by one Hugo under Roger de Courcelle, and that he had there two serfs, eleven villeins, and three bordiers, or a total population, including his own family, of about eighty-five souls. In the Pleas of the Forest we find Ashway repeatedly as a "township" and assessed as on about the same level as Withypool and Winsford, and only a little behind Dulverton and Exford.

At Badgworthy was an ancient farmhouse and one or more cottages, of which the ruined walls, pointed out to tourists as the ruined houses of the Doones, are the remains. The farm and the enclosed land round it belonged to the Prior of the Hospital of Jerusalem, who sold it to Walter, the son of William Bagworthy, from whom it descended to John Bagworthy, who in 1402 sold it to Lord Harrington. It is entered in the accounts of the Manor of Brendon in 1422 as follows: "And of 12s. rent of Badgworthy acquired by the lord of John Baiggeworthy twenty years ago, and of 2s. rent of one cottage next the tenement aforesaid of Badgworthy. And of 2s. rent

of the tenement of Badgeworthy for one decayed place there." When the place became uninhabited we do not know, but the "Batchery Enclosure" is one of the forest boundaries mentioned in the perambulation of 1651.

These are not solitary instances; many farmsteads are mentioned as possessing far larger populations than are to be seen there to-day, and there can be little doubt that this population kept on increasing until 1349, when the Black Death swept over the country, destroying from one-third to one-half of the population, and ravaging, if we are to credit the old accounts, West Somerset and North Devon with even greater deadliness than other parts of the kingdom.

From the old records referred to it can be seen that all the best, most desirable farms on the sheltered, sunny sides of the valleys were early occupied, those in more exposed places facing north being more modern. Thus we find in Pleas of the Forest prior to this date every farm on the north bank of the Barle from Dulverton to Simonsbath, with the exception of Uppington, and that we find as a personal name.

All this population had to live by the land and what it produced, there can have been no importation of food or clothing, for there were scarcely any roads, none fit for wheeled traffic. This necessitated a very considerable amount both of stock and of cultivation. Wheat was then probably unknown in the district; even in the present day it is not

cultivated on the hill farms, save in such small quantities as are required to produce reed for thatching. Here, again, the Pleas of the Forest help us, for we find set out the crops grown surreptitiously on land in the bounds of the forest; from these we gather that they had a sort of three-course system, sowing once with rye and twice with beans. Rye was largely cultivated till modern times, and the lowest layer of thatch on many an old cottage is rye straw to this day. As to the nature of the stock kept we have nothing to guide us; but farmers then, as now, no doubt kept that class of stock which they found most suitable to the land and the climate, and therefore we may fairly assume that the ancestors of the Red Devons of to-day cropped the good grass in the valleys, and that the hills were stocked with the same class of small, quick-moving, picturesque sheep which to-day make Exmoor mutton famous all over England.

For the protection of these crops, and for the safety of the live stock, a certain amount of enclosure must have existed, and this brings us to the consideration of a very difficult problem as to the nature and extent of this enclosure. The question is made more difficult by two things: First, the constantly repeated assertion that up to recent times there were no enclosures at all between Dulverton and Porlock; and, secondly, the fact that there have been two, if not three, distinct areas of enclosure.

No one can have ridden over the broad commons

which surround the ancient royal forest without having noticed remain of banks running across the heather in all directions. To what age are these to be ascribed? By some they have been attributed to the race, or more probably races, whose spade work is seen in the hut circles and some of the barrows which abound; to the race to whom must be attributed the small stone avenue on Manor Allotment, the barrows on Brightworthy, and the stone circle on Withypool Hill; or to the later race who threw up the earth works at Cow Castle, Brewer's and Bury Castles, and many others; as to this we have no direct means of knowing. The banks do not correspond to any known, or even traditionary, boundaries, and they in no way resemble the cattle enclosures and wolf platforms of the Wiltshire Downs.

If they were ever of a size to restrain the wanderings of cattle or sheep, and have been reduced by the natural effect of weather to their present dimensions, they must be of untold antiquity.

It must, however, be noted that they are almost entirely outside the forest limits; this may have been due to either of two causes. The black, peaty soil does not make an enduring bank, as can be easily seen from some of those put up since 1818 and not kept in repair, being found unnecessary; or they may date back to a time anterior to the iron rule of the Norman foresters, but subsequent to the time when the Saxon kings made Exmoor into a forest, and presumably protected it from enclosure. The

writer inclines to think the latter is the more probable solution, though probably all the banks are not attributable to the same era.

On either supposition it must, I think, be admitted that these are not the remnants of the enclosures in which the inhabitants in Norman times "night leared" their stock.

With the exception of a few actually in the villages, the homesteads must, though numerous, have been situated at some distance from each other. Each, in all probability, consisted of the house of the principal owner, some cottages for the villeins, and ranges of barns and cattle-sheds, all surrounding a courtyard; the whole forming a curtilage defensible alike against armed robbery—a thing not unknown in the district in those lawless times—and against weather, especially against snow.

Traces of this style of building may be seen in many of the farms to-day, though the security from armed foes has caused the chief house to have its windows facing outwards to the south, instead of occupying the north side and facing into the curtilage. Notable examples are Bratton Court, Cloutsham, Newland Farm at Withypool, Bradley, Hollowcombe at Hawkridge, Zeal, and many others. Each homestead was almost certainly surrounded by a belt of enclosures necessary for the protection of cattle at night, for feeding in the winter, and for the lambing ewes in the spring. Stock farming without a certain amount of enclosure is an impossibility.

With regard to the stock kept on the farms we have little positive information, but from the absence of population, and from the dearth of means of communication, it seems reasonable to suppose that the course of husbandry altered less among the hill farmers round Exmoor than in other parts of the country. The staple of their farming then, as now, was keeping sheep, but they kept them solely for the wool. Mutton was of no value whatever—in fact, it is reported that the Sir Thomas Acland who last had the hounds declared that the horned Exmoor sheep were absolutely uneatable. The reason is not far to seek. The breeding ewes received a trifle of attention, but they and their lambs were turned out on to the commons very shortly after the lambs were born. Both ewes and wethers remained out on the moor till they were so old that their teeth broke out, and they were killed to avoid starvation. There were no turnips or rape in those days, and all straw and such-like produce of the arable land was devoted to feeding the cattle and the ewes just before lambing. No wonder the “running wethers,” as they were called, were uneatable. “Might so well try to eat my old shoe,” as my aged friend from whom I received much information on these points exclaimed. The practice described above was the custom in the wilder parts of the country till within living memory. The introduction of turnips and winter feeding and improved means of communication caused the farmers to realise that early maturity and mutton paid better

than old age and starvation, and this necessitated a great increase in enclosure and the introduction of hedges. This revolution in sheep farming was coincident with the great rise in the price of corn consequent upon the Napoleonic war, and both causes led to enclosure and extended cultivation.

In addition to their ingrounds, or permanently enclosed ground, each farm seems to have had its own specific tract of arable land which remained unenclosed or only partially enclosed. This seems to have been cultivated in patches for a year or two, the stubbles being fed off by the ewes and young beasts under the care of a shepherd, and then the land was fallowed for a time and other land ploughed up. The area under crops was generally protected from trespass by sheep by the process of "ankle learing" (layering), that is, by putting up a little temporary bank with a little wattle fence on the top leaning outwards. It got its name from the fact that the maker stuck in a stick and bent it down over his ankle to pleach it, or twist it into the wattle. These fences were allowed to go into decay when the land was fallowed, and the traces of them disappeared when the land was permanently enclosed.

An examination of the original unimproved edition of the Ordnance Survey published in 1809 confirms this to some extent. There each farm is marked with a very small enclosure round it. The map is very badly done and very indistinctly printed, but many of the farms are shown as having a ring fence



A kill in Horner Water.

of some kind, probably a bank, round the whole farm. Careful inspection with a glass shows which of the roads—every track of any kind is mapped as if it were a main road—were fenced and which abutted on open ground. It is clear that these were islands, so to speak, of enclosure, sometimes of one farm, sometimes of more; but, except as regards the small “ingrounds,” individual farms do not appear to have been cut up into fields, except perhaps by the process of “ankle learing” round growing crops. The rest of the country was open.

When the great rise in the price of corn occurred after 1795, considerable stretches of land, even on the commons, were cultivated for a year or two. The upper part of Bradley Ham and a good piece of Winsford Hill by Comer's Gate carried crops of wheat, as did other parts of Withypool Common and South Hill near the cottage.

With perhaps one or two exceptions, these patches of cultivation have no connection with the old banks which abound in the heather; in fact, with the possible exception of some banks by Landacre, which are probably the encroachments reported on in the fourteenth century by the forest officers, none of the banks seem to bear any relation to any of even the oldest known farms.

There is hardly any trace anywhere in the hill country of the common-field system, though the balks, or lynes, or ledges, characteristic of it can be traced above Lynch Farm at Bossington.

The valleys around Porlock, Luccombe, and Dunster were, we know, highly cultivated from an early time, but they were probably enclosed and cultivated in severalty from remote ages. They must have been enclosed a long time before 1540, when Leland wrote of them: "From Culbone to Stert most parte of the shore is hilly ground and nere the shore is no store of wood; that that is ys al in hegge rows of enclosures. There is great plenty of benes in this quarter and great plenty of whete and catelle. . . ." Leland's account of the district is interesting. He rode "From Dunnesterre to Exford a 7 miles. Of these 7 miles 3 or 4 were all hilly and rokky, ful of Brokes in every Hilles botom and meatly wodded." He must have gone over the shoulder of Croydon Hill instead of up the Avill Vale, otherwise he would not have failed to notice Timberscombe, Harwood, Bickham, and other ancient farms in the valley. "These Brokes by my estimacion ran towards the Severn Sea. The Residew of the way to Exford was partly on a moore, and sumwhat barren of Corne, and partly hylly, having many Brookes gathering to the hither ripe of Ex Ryver. There is a little tymbre bridge at Exforde over Ex Brook, ther being but a smaull water.

"Ex risith in Exmoor at a place called Excrosse, a 3 miles of by North-Weste, and so goeth towards Tyvertun a XII. miles lower.

"From Exford to Simondsbath Bridge a 4 miles al by Forest Baren and Morisch ground where

is store and breeding of yong Catelle but little or no Corne or Habitation. . . .

" Ther runnith at this Place called Simonds bath a Ryver betwixt to great Morisch Hills in a deepe Botom and there is a Bridge of wood over this Water. The Water in Somer most comunely runnith flat upon stones easy to be passid over, but when Raynes come and stormes of Wyntre it ragith and ys depe. Alwayss this Streame is a great deale bigger Water than Ex is at Exford, yet it resortith unto Ex Ryver.

" The boundes of Somersetshire go beyond this streame one way by North-West a 2 miles or more to a place caullid Spanne and the Tourres; for ther be Hillockes of Yerth cast up of auncient tyme for Markes and Limites betwixt Somersetshir and Devonshire, and hereabout is the Limes and Boundes of Exmore Forest.

" From Simonsbath Bridge I rode up a high Morisch Hylle and so passing by 2 miles in lyke ground, the soyle began to be somewhat fruteful and the Hilles to be full of Enclosures, until I cam a 3 miles farther to a poore village caullid Brayforde where runnith a Broke by likelihood resorting to Simonsbath Water and Ex."

The chief interest of the quotation, which is the oldest known description of the country, lies in the fact that the traveller was struck by the amount of cattle, and by the number of small enclosures he saw as he rode down the track from Span Head by Yard Down.

Hole we know as an ancient manor, and the word Yard, or Garth, signifies an enclosure. It will not escape notice that Leland does not describe it as an enclosed country, like he does the Porlock Vale, but says the hills were full of enclosures; clearly the patches of enclosure surrounding such old houses as Lydcott, Grattan, and Hole.

The old saying one has heard so many times that in the time of the fathers of the present generation there was not an enclosure between Dulverton and Porlock, must be modified. There must always have been islands of enclosure; but it was probably true that till the great rage for hedges set in, in the latter years of the eighteenth century, there were only islands, and that the deer could, and did, travel over the whole country without crossing a fence.

When the Black Death cleared away so large a proportion of the population, there can be no doubt that the outlying hamlets, such as Ashway, Bagley, Badgworthy, and Chittisham must have been the first to suffer from the draining away of the bordiers and villeins to Dunster, Porlock, and other more highly cultivated lands, where, for the first time in the history of this country, wages came to be paid for farm work. The whole course of agriculture and country life was changed; farm hands formed themselves into associations to raise wages; Parliament declared such associations illegal, and went so far as to punish with fine and imprisonment those who paid the wages demanded. It was all to

no purpose. The laws of supply and demand, though little understood, were as inexorable then as now, and labour went where work and wages were awaiting it. A great part of England went temporarily out of cultivation, and we may be sure that a remote and difficult country, like that around Exmoor, would not escape. The district, it is reasonable to suppose, remained depopulated for a great length of time, and the wilder parts probably never regained their former population, though agriculture revived and the growth of corn somewhat increased.

We can tell the dates of much of the modern enclosure by the dates of the various Enclosure Acts, and indeed, were it necessary, the whole of the lands enclosed could be identified from the plans attached to the enclosure awards which are in the office of the Clerk of the Peace.

The principal acts are dated :

Anstey, 1825	Winsford, 1848
Dulverton, 1848	Porlock, 1854
Exmoor, 1818	Stoke Pero, 1848
Exford and Almsworthy, 1840	High Bray, 1863.

Such fences as there were to the ingrounds up to recent times consisted simply of stone-faced banks, which were innocent of the huge growths of beech and hornbeam which they carry now. These banks can have been little or no impediment to the deer, the hounds, or the riders, and glorious must have been the gallops a bold rider on a good horse must

have enjoyed over land where to-day we have to go from gate to gate. When the fashion of planting the banks with a double beech hedge originated is not clear, but men are alive now who helped to plant a great many of them. There was at Exford a large nursery of beech plants, and the owner realised a lot of money by selling them to the farmers. The Forest Enclosure Award in 1815 ordains the planting of beech on the top, and also the staking of the two sides with withy stakes, so many to a rod. Traces of this can be seen now, but most of the stakes seem to have perished.

The custom of the country is to let the beech hedge grow for about fifteen years, thus forming an admirable shelter for stock, and enabling both sheep and cattle to be kept out on bleak, exposed hills, where otherwise they would suffer severely from the cold storms which sweep over the country. At the end of fifteen years the tenant cuts and lays down the fence, keeping the cuttings for firewood, and a new hedge springs up and grows for another fifteen years. A careful examination when the leaves are off will show how many times the hedge has been cut and laid, and thus the age can be approximately ascertained.

Except in the immediate neighbourhood of old farms or villages, it is rare to find any hedges cut more than four times, which would give an age of about seventy to eighty years, and there is very little hedgerow timber suggestive of a greater age. The

various stages of modern enclosure can easily be traced in some places, because where an enclosure was authorised, a gate was allowed to be put across the roadway—as Comer's Gate, Mountsey Hill Gate, Scob Hill Gate, and numerous others—to prevent sheep straying from the common. Wherever there was in old days a gate there were naturally two breastworks and gateposts to hang it to. As the enclosure encroached on the waste the gates were moved further on up the road, but the old breastwork remains, jutting out from the bank on each side. There is one just above Highercombe Farm, and there are several in Ash Lane leading up from Winsford, and one in Stone Lane; but even these must be comparatively modern—in early times there can have been little or no permanent enclosure away from the homesteads.

That every man and woman in the district rode on horseback goes without saying; wheeled vehicles were unknown till quite recent times: there were no roads for them to travel on.

The ancient roadmaker followed the ridge of hills; hence the frequent terms "Ridgway" and "Redway" in country places; and the earliest we can trace ran along the coast to Lynton and thence by County Gate, where it was commanded by the fortification above Glenthorne, and followed the present line of the coach road to Hawkcombe, where it probably forked as it does now, one branch leading to Porlock and Dunster, the other running by Alderman's Barrow

and across Almsworthy Common to Edgcott and Exford. From this point on, beside the river and up the hill by Road Castle to Room Hill, it is called in 1257 "The Great Way." At or near Spire Cross it crossed the trackway from Windsor to Hawkridge. Probably the Great Road turned here to the right, and crossing the Barle at Tarr Steps, went on by Anstey and Old Ways End along the high land west of Exe to Tiverton, and thence to Exeter.

There must have been a trackway to Dulverton by way of Court Down, and Catford's Lane, but this would be of minor importance.

There was another main road which started from Gloucester and went to Clifton, crossing the Avon by the old ford a few hundred yards below the present suspension bridge, where it was fortified on both sides, and, following approximately the present roadway, came to Cadbury Camp. Thence it went by a devious line to Yatton, and by Banwell to the ford on the Axe River at Cross, and across Brent Marsh to Pawlett, where it joined the road from Old Sarum. Leaving the Pawlett Hills by the Shoulder of Mutton Inn—where Monmouth slept the night before Sedgemoor—the track ran straight to Combwich Passage over the Parret, and passing between Cannington Park and Idstock, went by Keenthorn to the Quantock Hills, which it crossed by the existing track under Danesborough to Crowcombe, and by Willet and Elworthy to Raleigh's Cross, and the Heathpoult, and down to Quarme Water at

Bushwell Bridge. From here to where it merges in the modern high road to Exford, the old road is known as Hare Path. Hare Path or War Path is its old name throughout its entire length, and the name can be traced in many places. Crossing the River Exe at Exford the track went on by Simonsbath along the Challacombe road to Moles Chamber, where some part of it can be traced in its original condition—a series of deep pack-horse tracks skirting the hill-side—and so by Leeworthy Bridge to Barnstaple, Redruth, and Falmouth. This was by far the most important road in this part of England, but even this was nothing but a track; the Roman with his well-made roads never penetrated to the wilds of Exmoor. These old British trackways went along the tops of the hills, probably for three reasons; first, the tracks in the valleys were rocky in some places, boggy in others, and involved frequent fording of the rivers. Those who remember the state of the Barle Valley twenty years ago, before the land-owners remade the paths, will easily appreciate this. The Exe Valley was little, if anything, better before the new road was made in 1824. Secondly, the valleys being wooded, travellers were more likely to be ambushed by robbers; and, thirdly, in very early times, the wooded valleys were infested with packs of wolves, to which a string of pack-horses fall an easy prey.

There is one road over the moor which remains unaltered, as it has been for an unknown number of

centuries—Perriam's Way, better known to hunting people as the Green Path. It runs from Hawkcombe Head across the Weare Water and Chalk Water below Acmead and by Larkbarrow to the Warren and Pray Way to Exe Head, and joins the old road before mentioned near Moles Chamber. These were the most used tracks; there were, of course, others leading from hamlet to hamlet, but they must have been little used, though the traces of them, deep ruts in the heather, are clearly discernible. A good specimen is the track from North Molton to Porlock, which came by the existing road to Landacre, and by Chibbet Post, anciently Chubbizete, to Exford, not by the present road, but by the deep pack-horse track and occupation line straight down the hillside to the bridge, and up the other side by the track we ride going to the meet at Cloutsham. The Horner Valley was crossed at Pool Bridge, and the riders went along the green trackway on the north side of Lee Hill, above Bell Wood, and down the rocky path to Doverhay.

A very old track ran from Porlock Weir to the old, long-forgotten Manor of Bagley, *via* Porlock Ford, and up a narrow, winding track to Birchhanger, over the hill to Broadway, across the middle of Hawkcombe to Luccott, thence by Wilmersham and Stoke Pero to Bagley. It can be traced, and there is, I believe, a right of way there now; but a few years ago, before the new Ordnance Survey, it was marked on the maps, it was actually coloured on a cycling

map, and there was much trouble in persuading an enthusiastic cyclist staying at Porlock Weir, who had an implicit faith in his map, that he would not be able to ride his machine that way.

On some of these old tracks are to be found the old pack-horse bridges over the streams: narrow bridges, with parapets low enough not to interfere with the loads hanging in the "crooks." The best specimens are that at Millslade, over the Brendon Water, and that where Hackety Way crosses the Horner, just below Horner Green. There was an old pack-horse bridge of four arches across the Barle at Withypool—the present roadway and bridge are quite new—and the old piers and abutments exist to this day, while the line of the old North Molton track skirting the hillside, avoiding the wet ground and turning abruptly down to the old bridge, is plainly to be seen. The old, narrow village street which led down to the bridge has mostly been pulled down.

Nothing has tended to alter the look of the country and the ways of life of the people more than the metalling of the roads and the introduction of wheeled traffic. Dwellers in more civilised lands find it hard to realise how lately these improvements were introduced into the hill country.

Collinson's history of Somersetshire was published in 1791, and he says of Withypool: "Here no carts nor wagons are ever used, the roads being impassable for wheeled vehicles and scarcely pervious for horses."

Somewhere about 1830 to 1840 the road was metalled from Withypool nearly to Chibbet Post. There was no metal on the road to Dulverton. The first cart owned in Withypool was built shortly after this at Roadwater to the order of Mr. John Quartly, grandfather of the present John and James, who farmed at Weatherslade. The cart was brought over in triumph on a Saturday, but nearly stuck in the narrow lane from Exford—the only made road—as it was not wide enough. Next day the whole population went to church, and men who would resent being called old can remember being led there by their mothers to look at the great man who had brought the cart. He stayed several days to harness and break the horse. Mr. Webber, of Withypool, was carrier to Tiverton, and clearly remembers the road over Winsford Hill being metalled; from Comer's Gate to the head of Marsh Hill there was nothing but a series of ruts out of which it was impossible to turn a loaded cart. This must have been awkward if two carts met, but, as Mr. Webber explained, "You never did meet anything."

The visitor who tries to realise what the country looked like, and how the people lived, must wipe out from his mind all ideas based on the present system of roads.

There was no road up the Exe Valley from Dulverton to Cutcombe and Dunster till 1824, and though a few roads were made under old Turnpike Acts, most of the roads now existing are dated

subsequent to the Highways Act of 1834. There were tracks, and each parish stopped the worst of the holes in its own tracks. The road from Withypool by Porchester Post, Willingford Water, and Cuzzicombe Post is a good specimen of what the old roads were like. The roughly-made bit from Porchester Post to Willingford was made and metalled under the award for the enclosure of Hawkrigge Common. Specimens of old roadway of a more civilised type may be found between Cutcombe and Hart Cleeve and in the old parish road from Porlock Weir to Culbone, and from Porlock, by Butt Walls and Yarnor, to Broomstreet and Countisbury.

Till well on into the last century the post chaise at the Lion, the Acland travelling carriage at Pixton, and Mrs. Beague's travelling carriage at Hollam were the only wheeled vehicles in the town of Dulverton. The valleys, such as that from Porlock to Dunster and Williton, were no doubt provided with fair roads in quite early times, and probably one of the earliest was that from Porlock to Dunster. Porlock and Minehead were both considerable ports, but most of their goods must have been carried on pack-horses. We find, however, in the entries of account of the manor of Porlock in 1425, "In payment to John Godde for going to Dunster with the lady's wagon and 2 servants to fetch one pipe of wine and carrying it to the house, 4d." From which it is clear that there must have been some sort of wagon road between the two places even at that early date.

All farm work was done till quite recent times with pack-horses and sleds (the use of the latter, indeed, has not been entirely abandoned where there is much steep ground), and a load of manure in the old farming agreement means a pack-horse load. The pillion was in use in this district long after it was unknown elsewhere, and the late Mr. George Catford, of North Combe, used to tell how his father and mother always rode pillion to Winsford Fair.

The difficulties of locomotion in the district, especially in bad weather, gave rise to many curious tales, and there is reason to suppose that many of them are authentic. There can be little doubt that the stories that at some outlying farms it was necessary to "salt in" a dead body, till it was possible to convey it to the churchyard are true, though it is scarcely credible that anyone who had lost his wife could be so thoughtless as to forget all about her, and leave her "salted in" in an oak dower chest for his new bride to find on her return from the wedding.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FOREST OF EXMOOR UNDER THE PLANTAGENETS AND TUDORS.

May a poor huntsman with a merry heart,
A voice shall make the forest ring around him,
Get leave to live amongst ye? True as steel, boys,
'That knows all chases, and can watch all hours,
Prick ye the fearful hare thro' crossways, sheep-walks,
And force the crafty reynard climb the quicksets;
Rouse ye the lofty stag, and with my bell horn
Ring him a knell, that all the woods shall mourn.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER (*The Beggar's Bush*).

THE sale of the office of forester in fee of Exmoor, and of the other forests in Somerset, in 1359, by Roger de Beauchamp to Roger de Mortimer, Earl of March, marks a new era in the history of Exmoor—an era the early part of which is clouded in more dense obscurity than that which overshadowed the earlier period. We have no records of forest courts to help us, and the great lords of the district, such as the Luttrells, Trevelyans, Harringtons, must have been too much engaged in fighting—first the French, and then the causes of York and Lancaster—to spare much time or thought for the hunting of the red deer. The strictness of the Norman foresters was undoubtedly relaxed; and if the great nobles

were too engrossed with other matters to hunt much, we may depend upon it that the smaller squires made the most of their opportunities. That a "cry of dogs," able to kill a stag after a run over the open, had been kept by the Tracys at Bremridge in early days is duly recorded, because they were summoned to the forest court for running a stag on to the forest and killing it, and we cannot suppose that when the forest laws came to be less forcibly administered other people did not do the same. Indeed, we know that in 1259 Richard Beaumont, of the county of Devon, Molyns his hunter, and other servants took several stags and hinds without warrant. If this was done in defiance of the law when fully enforced we may easily surmise what would happen when the rigour was relaxed. The absurd restrictions on the hunting of purlieu men would, it is reasonable to suppose, be the first part of the law to be allowed to drop into abeyance.

Knowing as we do the descendants of the men who then held the land, it is not possible to believe that they sat quietly at home and saw their crops devastated by the deer without enjoying the pleasure of a hunt.

Roger Mortimer, the first of his line to hold the office of forester, died in 1361, and was succeeded by Edmund Mortimer, who died in 1381, who was followed by Roger Mortimer, who died a minor in Ireland in 1398. To him succeeded Edmund Mortimer, who, dying in 1424, the forestership with the rest of the Mortimer property, devolved

on Anne, who married Richard of Cambridge, and thus the office came to be vested in the Dukes of York, and so in time became merged in the Crown properties.

This appears to be the simplest explanation of how the forestership passed from the Mortimers to the Dukes of York, and it is borne out by the fact that an inquisition post-mortem held in 1425 into the estates of the late Edward Mortimer, Earl of March, enumerates Exmoor among his other possessions. Yet we find in 1409 Edward, Duke of York—who we know owned the Manor of Cutcombe in right of his wife Philippa Mohun—described as “Chief Forester of the Royal forest this side of Trent,” and giving orders about the Forest of Petherton, which, equally with Exmoor, was vested in the Mortimers. This is the Edward Duke of York who wrote the “Master of Game,” and was the father of the Duke of York who subsequently was Forester of Exmoor.

The Mortimers held the office of foresters of the other Somerset forests as well as of Exmoor, but their personal connection with the county was of the slightest kind. They were the first holders of the office to appoint deputies with full powers. Edmund Mortimer, who succeeded in 1361, was a minor, and Richard de Acton, a Somerset man, was his deputy from 1362 to 1365, with James Payn as a *locum tenens*; after him Guy de Brien, a large landowner in West Somerset—there are Bryants

holding land near Taunton at the present day—held office with the same *locum tenens*, who afterwards acted for Edmund Mortimer without anyone over him. Who James Payn was there is no record. In 1382, owing to the fact that Roger was a minor, the custody of the forest was granted during his minority to Sir Peter de Courtenay.

The Dukes of York followed the example of the Mortimers in appointing deputies, and Collinson's History gives the following list :—

1389 Richard Brittle and Geoffrey Chaucer (the poet).

1396 Geoffrey Chaucer.

1416 Thomas Chaucer.

1429 William Wrothe and Thomas Attmore. By the Duke of York.

1450 Sir William Bonville and Richard Luttrell.

1454 Richard Stafford and Richard Luttrell.

1459 James Boteler, Earl of Ormonde.

In 1460 the forestership merged in the Crown, and the succeeding officers were duly appointed foresters, not deputies.

1462 Philip de St. Maur.

1465 Sir Giles Daubeney for life.

1507 Robert Wrothe held the office of forester for Petherton for thirty-five years, but whether he acted for Exmoor as well seems doubtful.

Of Richard Brittle nothing is known, but Burtle is a common name in Somerset further up the county.

Geoffrey Chaucer's works, like those of all writers of that period, show much knowledge of hunting and other sports, the occupation of gentlemen; but there is no reason to suppose that he ever took an active

part in the administration of Exmoor. Neither, so far as we know, did Thomas Chaucer, his son, though the latter was connected with West Somerset. He was Constable of the Castle at Taunton, and married Maud de Berghersh, niece of Joan, wife of John de Mohun, of Dunster.

Joan de Mohun survived her husband and left three daughters: Elizabeth, who married William de Montacute, Earl of Salisbury; Philippa, who married Edward, Duke of York; and Matilda, married to Sir John Strange. It was this Joan who sold Dunster to Sir Hugh Luttrell.

William Wrothe and Thomas Attwood were the first officers appointed under the Dukes of York; the former was probably one of the family of de Wrotham who had for so many years been foresters in fee.

Sir William Bonville, who with Richard Luttrell was appointed deputy in 1450, had an intimate connection with the district and with staghunting, for he had married Elizabeth, widow of the fourth Lord Harrington, and the lady of the manors of Porlock and Brendon. She is the lady who, with her first husband, is buried under the fine carved monument in Porlock Church. The Manor of Porlock was, with the exception of that of North Molton, the only one abutting on Exmoor which contained a deer park. The right to hold two fairs annually and a market on every Thursday, and leave to impark "his demesne

woods" at Porlock, were among the lavish rewards showered on Sir Nigel Loring, the Lord of the Manor of Porlock, as a reward for his gallant services at Crecy, Poitiers, and before Calais. His daughter Isabella married the third Lord Harrington, whose son, the fourth lord, led a stalwart company of Porlock men at Agincourt, including twenty-nine lances and eighty-six archers, among whom were John Godde and his son. They probably returned safe and sound, as we find a John Godde bailiff of Porlock and Brendon under Lady Bonville. The Goddes, or Goddards, have existed in the neighbourhood from that day to this, being represented now by James Goddard, the host of the "Anchor" at Porlock Weir, a first-rate staghunter and a good No. 1 in a polo team.

The park at Porlock consisted of the eastern part of the big hanging covert between West Porlock and the foot of Porlock Hill, a part of the covert known as the Parks to this day. It may be noticed that the woods west of this are traversed with ancient tracks over which there is even now a right of way, but that in "the Parks" there are none but modern rides, except, perhaps, that precipitous track known as the Lady's Stair.

Sir William Bonville was beheaded in 1461; his son and grandson were both killed in the previous year at the battle of Wakefield. He was succeeded by his great-granddaughter, Cecily Bonville, who married Thomas Grey, first Marquis of Dorset,

and was therefore great-grandmother of the unfortunate Lady Jane Grey.

Sir William Bonville ceased to be forester in 1454, and was succeeded by Richard Stafford, who was presumably some relation to the Lord Stafford who subsequently married Cecily Bonville as her second husband.

Richard Stafford and Richard Luttrell held office until 1459, and it is hard to believe that under their *régime*, and with their intimate connection with two such sporting estates as Dunster and Porlock, hunting was not regularly carried on.

In 1461, on the accession of Edward IV., the forestership in fee vested in the Crown and became extinct, as the whole land of the forest was a Royal possession, and from this time the office seems to have been the subject of temporary grants to Royal favourites, who, with the exception perhaps of Sir Giles Daubeney, looked rather to the profits of agisting cattle than the pleasures of stag-hunting.

Of James Boteler and Philip de St. Maur in connection with Exmoor we know little, nor is there any record of John St. Albin, but the latter was certainly admirably placed at Ashway for hunting the country, though whether he did so or not is not recorded.

In 1477 Sir Giles Daubeney, afterwards Lord Daubeney, a well-known Somersetshire man owning land at South Petherton, was appointed forester for

his life. He was a busy man who took an active part in the affairs of the country generally, but did not neglect West Somerset. He was a near connection of the Luttrells, and of the Trevelyans of Nettlecombe. One of the earliest acts of Henry VII. on his accession was to appoint Sir Giles Daubeny Master of the Harthounds. He was much too busy a man to do more than supervise either the forest or the hounds, and we know that he appointed his cousin, Sir John Trevelyan, of Nettlecombe, to look after the game on Exmoor, and it is not unnatural to surmise that this included the hounds.

This is probably the explanation of the dispute between Sir John and the Luttrells, which is alluded to in a letter from Sir Giles, published by the Camden Society :—

COUSYN TREVYLION,

I comaund me unto you in as herty maner as I can, and understand that upon my late w^{ri}ting unto you for taking hede unto the Kinges game wⁱn the forest of Exmore, we have right well endeavoured you for the good keeping of the same; for the which I am right hertely well contented wth you and pray you of y^e like continuance of the same. Howe soo be it I am enformed that of late a little grugge is fallen bitwene my brother Sir Hugh Luttrell and you, for that he hunted of late in the oute wods of the said forest, and thereupon a couple of hounds were taken up by svants of yo^re from his svants. After that, Cousyn, inasmoche as my said broth^r Luttrell is a borderer of the said forest, and that ye knowe he hath married my sister, and the man whome I do love tenderly : my minde is and desire unto you that ye shuld have an yghe unto hym above all others in those p^{ar}ties : And that when it shall like hym to kyll a dere or to hunt for his disport; that ye

suffer hym soo to do I pray you as hartely as I can. W^hten at Grenewiche the xx daie of Feverer. And I pray you Cousyn let my broder take his disporte, and if he list let hym kyll one dere in somer and a nother in wynter hereafter.

Yor Cousin,
GILES DAUBENY.

To my Cousyn,
SIR JOHN TREVELION, *Knight*.

We know that Henry VII. was very keen on stag-hunting, and this little episode shows that, even in a district so remote as Exmoor, forest rights were looked after and forest laws enforced.

When, however, we find that a right to hunt, such as is implied in the Mastership of the Hart Hounds, is conferred on the foresters, and when we remember that, owing to the disabilities imposed on the Purlieu men as to hunting in company and entering on the forest, the chief forester, who could hunt anywhere in any company, was the only person who could show real sport, it is not unreasonable to suppose that he kept the hounds of which he was Master in the country where they would so frequently have to hunt.

Sir Hugh Luttrell's offence was hunting in an "outwood" or purlieu, not *on the forest*, and was a trespass rather against the Purlieu man than against the King, and it is hardly likely Sir John Trevelyan would have taken such a strong step as to seize hounds had he not been acting on behalf of the forester's hounds which wanted to draw the same coverts.

Sir Giles Daubeney died in 1508.

Henry VIII. succeeded to the throne in 1509 and settled the Forest of Exmoor together with all the rights belonging to it upon his wife, Katherine of Arragon, who leased them to Sir Thomas Boleyn, father of Anne Boleyn, and descendant of the Robert Boleyn who is described in the Perambulation of 1298 as of Spire Liscombe, in the parish of Winsford (the farm between Knaplock and Ashway). He held certain forests, farms, and offices of Queen Katherine at a rent of £46 13s. 4d., "saving and excepting one hundred deer to be and remain in the said Forest of Exmoor," and in 1520 he covenanted to hand the same over to the Earl of Devonshire.

This sum of £46 13s. 4d. continued to be the accepted rental of the Forest of Exmoor and the rights belonging to it until the last lease of the forest granted in 1780 to Sir Thomas Acland, Bart., though large fines were doubtless in most cases paid for the grant of the lease, that on the last being £510.

The wording of this covenant "saving and excepting one hundred deer to be and remain in the said Forest of Exmoor" is worthy of note, for the necessary implication is that the hunting rights were included in the settlement and also the lease. The number "a hundred" being specified as the minimum head to be left.

This practice of granting the right of hunting with the lease of the forest seems to have been followed

continuously from this date, and formed the authority under which the lessees of the forest kept up the staghounds during the eighteenth century.

The unfortunate Anne Boleyn does not seem ever to have succeeded to Exmoor, but it was settled on Lady Jane Seymour, and after her death was reserved into the King's own hands.

Sir Hugh Pollard, who appears to have come from a family belonging to King's Nympton, in Devon, and Kilve, a village lying between the foot of the Quantocks and the sea, held office on Exmoor, but the date of his appointment is unknown. That he lived somewhere on or near the forest seems probable from a document, dated 1520, now in the Record Office, and quoted by Mr. Rawle in his book. There seems to have been a robbery at Hillersdon House, between Cullompton and Exeter, and search was made for two servants named Holland :

" Caused the city of Exeter to be searched for William ; sent also to Sir Hugh Pollard to keep the fords over the Ex in Exmoor."

This either means that Sir Hugh Pollard held some office as deputy for the Sheriff, or it betrays a most astonishing ignorance of the district ; for the " Ex in Exmoor " is nowhere more than a foot deep, except in a few holes, and only a yard or two across. The most likely supposition is that the thief was trying to take an unfrequented route to Porlock Weir, with a view to crossing to Wales, when he

might be expected to cross Exmoor by Pray Way, the road from Simonsbath to Brendon, to avoid the wet ground. Pray way means "drift" way, and was the "pass" by which they drove the cattle and sheep when the forest was driven for estrays and cattle wrongfully agisted, and where they were taken by the free suitors of Withypool, and carried off to the pound there.

Of this Sir Hugh Pollard in relation to stag-hunting we know nothing, nor how long he remained in office, or by whom he was succeeded.

Hunting—at all events, hunting "at force," as is shown by Mr. Baillie Grohman in his introduction to the "Master of Game"—was at a low ebb throughout England generally, and Henry VIII. and Elizabeth seem to have had more taste for shooting the deer with cross-bows, or hunting it in an enclosed park, with a pack of hounds bred for their cry rather than for other hunting qualities. The fashion set by Royalty was no doubt followed by the nobility and gentry, who were also at this time not only worn out in purse and estate by the long civil contest the country had only recently emerged from, but were kept poor by the continued exactions and increased taxation of the Crown.

This taste for park hunting is abundantly shown by numberless references in Shakespeare and contemporary writers.

We find Henry, third Marquis of Dorset, the father of Lady Jane Grey, Lord of the Manor of Porlock,

writing to complain of the broken-down state of his "park" at Porlock to John Arundel, who had been appointed "keeper" for Porlock and Brendon by the marquis's grandmother Cecily Bonville :—

Cosyn Arundell aftr my herty recomendacions perscevyng that my game and plesure which I was wont to haue in Purloke in the ntie (countie) of Somersett is now in schuche dekaye that hit is very nyghe vtterly destroyd, I require you hertly to take the payne to haue the kepyng and ouershyght theroff, trustyng by youre meanes that hit schalbe schortly in some better sorte and order, whereby I shall haue cause to thanke you and thus most hertly fare ye well ; in jast ffrom the kinge's Matie palayse off Westmynstr the xxvij off January. Yor lovyng cousyn

HENRY DORSETT.

That Elizabeth could on occasion appreciate a good run over a country, and ride it right through regardless of consequences, is related in her life by Miss Strickland, who tells how she appointed to meet the French Plenipotentiaries who came to negotiate a marriage with the Duc d'Alençon at George Pomfret's house at Easton :—

"The excitement of the chase, however, proved more interesting to Elizabeth than the discussions of her union with Monsieur d'Alençon, and she kept the procurators waiting for her two days at Easton, for having started a large swift stag on the morning previous to that appointed for their audience, she pursued it all the day and till the middle of the night, and was so greatly fatigued in consequence that she was compelled to keep her chamber all the next day."

The tendency to look on the forest as a grazing rather than a sporting estate seems to have been growing steadily during this period.

In a State paper, vol. 73, No. 50, dated September 1st, 1570, we find William Cecil, Lord Burghley, writing in his own hand to the Earl of Bedford—though what he had to do with it is not apparent—as follows :—

TO Y^e EARL OF BEDFORD.

We Greet you well. Where^s our trusty and well beloved servant Robert Colshill one of our Gentlemen Pensioners has our present right of ye herbage of our forrest of Exemore, hath been forced for maintenance of our rights, to implead certain psons there in those ptes who refuse to paye such duties for y^e herbage of their Cattell in our sayd forrest, as in right they ought, and as by our records we be informed in former tymes hath been answered.

He goes on to urge the Earl to get the matter settled without litigation if possible.

How long Mr. Colshill was in occupation we do not know, but subsequently the forest rights were vested in Peter Edgcombe, of Mount Edgcombe, and he, in 1585, mortgaged them to Sir John Poyntz, who appointed Roger Sydenham, of North Quarum, as his ranger. The West Country seems to have been in a very lawless condition, and Mr. Roger Sydenham must have had his hands full to protect the deer. The record of some proceedings in the Star Chamber, in 1592, printed by the Somerset Record Society, discloses a curious state of affairs. We have, of course, only one side of the story, but

it looks very much as if the disturbances were only a part, or symptom, of a general opposition to the exactions of the forest officers; an opposition which the more lawless spirits carried out in the way described. The row began apparently by Roger Sydenham complaining to Sir John Poyntz against Humphrey Sydenham—a relative, presumably—described as “the Captaine of a certain bande of trained soldiers,” and also Richard Langham, Richard Hurford, and others for “spoile lately committed on the deer.”

Sir John ordered proceedings in the Star Chamber, which, it will be noted, seems to have superseded the Court of the Chief Justice of the Forests in Eyre. In these proceedings Roger Sydenham alleged that “there had always been kept a game of red deare in the forest.”

Humphrey Sydenham, Edmund Horner, Humphrey Quircke, and the other defendants at once filed a cross complaint against Roger, but on what ground is not stated—probably they alleged overstocking of the common, wrongfully extorting agistment moneys, &c.; the usual charges against forest officers, of which we shall see a specimen presently. Humphrey and his friends, looking around for money to sustain their suit, hit on the device of holding a Church Ale. The subsequent events, though not strictly connected with staghunting, throw such a curious light on the state of the country as to be worth recording:—

"And it was agreed that a certain Ale should be made in the name of some poor man, without any license or authority, to procure the people and inhabitants of sundry Parishes thereabouts to come to the said Ale, and then to expend divers sums of money, which was indeed to no other end than that such benefit as should arise and come by means therof should be bestowed on the maintenance of such suits so commenced against your subject . . . which Ale the said Robert Langham proclaimed to be sold at Skilgate Church," of which Robert Sydenham, the ranger, was churchwarden. Langham and others put the ale in the church, which Roger, not liking, put it out and some of it was wasted. Whereupon Langham and his friends "did in very riotous and disordered manner break open the Church" and put in some 300 or 400 gallons, and about Easter sent to sixteen or seventeen churches near Skilgate, requiring the parson, vicar, or curate "openly in their Churches, at the tyme of Divine Service, upon some Sunday or Hollyday to signify and make proclamation to the Parishioners to come and spend their money at the aforesaid Ale, which was done at every one of the aforesaid Parishes accordingly."

This looks very much as if there was a strong local sympathy with the malcontent party. Humphrey Sydenham, "Captain of a certain Band of trained soldiers in the s^d county," sent to them to come to Skilgate and muster there "with their furniture,"

and "were there employed only in the drinkinge of Ale, and for fear of their Captain's displeasure were made to spend money at the Ale, more than some of them had gotten in money before." On another occasion Humphrey called up 100 of his men, whose total strength was 300, to Dulverton, to a "Byd Ale" of one John Glasse. Upon Thursday in Easter week they gathered in great troupes or companies from Taunton, which was a score of miles away, and other places to Skilgate. A man named Milton was stationed on the hill above the church where he could see a mile of road to give notice of their approach. In the middle of Divine service, when the curate was beginning the Homily, Milton ran into the church crying, "They are come, they are come. Ring out the bells." Mr. Langham commanded the curate to surcease the service, and had the bells rung and caused "dyvers bagg-pipes to be blown to the great dishonour of Almighty God and in contempt of your Majesty's laws."

They appear not to have been content with this, but to have gone round the country levying exactions—probably they called it collecting subscriptions—and realised altogether £60. The scene then shifts to London. It is alleged that the conspirators met and tried to waylay Roger Sydenham on his way to his lodging at a public-house in the Strand, and not succeeding they hired a bravo, or bully, named Rattenbury, to go to his lodging and "pike" a

quarrel with him, and challenge him to fight, which Roger prudently declined. Roger escaped home, though he alleges that the conspirators agreed to waylay and murder him in the Strand. We next hear that Edward Horner, "being a bad man"—and, indeed, he cannot have been a pleasant neighbour—collected twenty-eight armed men at Taunton on fair day, and professing to act as bailiff paraded the fair and extorted money and goods.

In the following year the same set of men went at night to the house of George Webb in Taunton, "which did there keep a beare or beares," and demanded that he should bring out the bear, which he refused. They then broke open his house "and forcibly did take from him his beare and carried him through the streets of Taunton . . . hooping and hollowing and making most strange outcrys and unwonted noyses . . . and some of the doors they did break open and suffered the said beare to come about loose thereby disturbing the whole town, whereby many of the inhabitants were likely to have been driven out of their wittes and fallen madd . . . and so in that sort they carried the said beare into the open market place at Taunton, then being between the hours of 12 and 1 in the night, and by the space of three hours with dogs and other devices, with whippes and wheelbarrows bayte the said beare and did not tye the said beare but in this manner bayted him lose, and did then and there fall

at variance with divers very honest inhabitants of good account and credit, which came out of their houses to view the said outrage " and remonstrate. On the precise method of baiting a bear with a wheelbarrow the old books are silent, but, after all, something must be left to the imagination.

It is stated by Mr. Greswell, in his history of the Forests of Somerset, that the Forest of Petherton was a sort of Alsatia long after disafforestation, and drew together restless and unquiet spirits. Even so late as 1719 this was a grievance. "At a meeting of parishioners in vestry assembled it was voted that all who did not belong to the parish should be sent out of it . . . that all unlicensed ale houses should be utterly repressed as receptacles of thieves and nurseries of lewdness and debauchery."

These are probably the people whom Edmund Horner, "the bad man," collected to help the malcontents on Exmoor against the ranger. The trouble seems to have lasted several years, though what came of it finally we do not know, but there clearly was more in it than a casual case of deer stealing. The ranger's task, even with the help of the fifty-two "free suitors" of Hawkridge and Withypool, men who, if tradition be correct, were not likely to stick at trifles, cannot have been an easy or pleasant one during the concluding years of Elizabeth's reign.

When Sir John Poyntz ceased to be forester is not known, but in 1598 we find Hugh Pollard, Esq., probably grandson of the old Sir Hugh, established as ranger or forester, it is not clear which, and, according to tradition, keeping a pack of staghounds at Simonsbath.



(Photograph by C. Mardon, Esq.
Run to a standstill.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ROYAL HOUNDS.

Wind, jolly huntsmen, your neat bugles shrilly,
Hounds make a lusty cry.—JOHN FORD.

WE have seen how complete was the organisation of a Royal forest, what an array of officials were charged with the enforcement of the law, and with what strictness they carried out their duties. For whose benefit was all this done? That the Crown derived a certain amount of revenue from a forest is admitted, but there can have been but little from Exmoor. A few fines and a few customary payments, such as the bull and fourteen heifers, or 10*d.* each, payable on the descent of the hereditary forestorship. Even at a later date, when the agistment of cattle and sheep had become valuable, the annual rental payable in respect of Exmoor was only £46 13*s.* 4*d.*

Whatever may have been the case in other forests, such as Sherwood and Selwood and the Forest of Dean, where much valuable timber was grown, the barren hills of West Somerset must have been maintained as Royal forests mainly, if not entirely, for the sake of the deer. Who had a right to hunt

these deer? The answer is the King, and those only who held licences from the King. Licences were rarely granted. The only record in those early days of a licence to kill deer, which is to be found in the very meagre collection of forest rolls contained in the Record Office, is a presentation by the foresters and verderers in 1257 that Reginald de Mohun killed four stags and three roebucks by writ of the Lord King. The Mohuns, who held the Manor of Exford, at that time included in the forest, exercised "*jura regalia*," which included the right of hunting over their extensive possessions at and around Dunster. This leads to an examination as to what was the King's hunting establishment in early days, and what was the practice with regard to staghunting in the Royal forests.

The first thing which becomes quite clear from such an inquiry is that the primary object of preserving the deer was to insure a supply of venison for the Royal larder; sport was, except where the King or some great noble was present, of quite secondary consideration.

The King's huntsman, under whatever title the office was described, was responsible for the killing, salting, or powdering, and despatching to the Court of a due supply of venison. His appointment as huntsman itself carried with it the authority to hunt and kill deer. This is important to notice, because an appointment as forester, even as forester in fee, or of warden, or of ranger of a forest, carried with

it of itself no right of hunting; the duties were solely to preserve the "game of red deer." It is only when we find the two offices combined that the forester had any right of hunting. Whether this held good under the rule of the Saxon Kings there is no means of knowing, but it seems safe to affirm that after the dispossession of Dodo, Ulmar, and Godric, Robert d'Auberville, Lord of the Manors of Withypool and Hawkridge, forester in fee of Exmoor, and huntsman to William I., was the first to hold the office of Master of the Staghounds on Exmoor.

We also find the family of Lovell established in a similar manner at a very early time at Hunter's Manor, Little Weldon, Northamptonshire, holding the lands "in capite," or direct from the King, by the service of keeping up a pack of hounds to hunt the fallow buck, primarily in the adjacent Forest of Rockingham. The hounds are carefully described as buckhounds, not as harthounds.

The Lovells and their descendants held this manor and kept up the hounds for many generations until the lands and office passed, in 1395, to Sir Bernard Brocas, of Beaurepaire and Clewer, in right of his wife, Mary, daughter of Sir Thomas de Borhunte, who had married Mary, the heiress of the Lovells. The Mastership of the Buckhounds remained in the Brocas family till 1633, when the office and manor were sold to Sir Lewis Watson, afterwards Lord Rockingham. This pack of hounds, which for many generations travelled with the Court and was that

with which the King took his sport, had fallen from its high estate and practically ceased to exist since Henry VIII. started an independent pack, paid for out of the Privy Purse, at Windsor, under the Mastership of Lord Rochester, brother of Anne Boleyn. This latter pack continued under the name of the Royal Buckhounds until the accession of the present King.

There seem, however, to have existed quite independently of the buckhounds one or sometimes more packs of harthounds, whose sole duty seems to have been that of purveying venison for the Royal larder.

The complete hunting establishment of the early Kings seems to have consisted of two justices of the forest for the two districts north and south of the Trent, under whom were all the forest officers carrying out the duty of preserving the vert and venison; one or, perhaps two, Masters of Game for the same districts having general supervision over all the packs of hounds; the hereditary Master of the Buckhounds, and usually two Masters of Harthounds bearing the formidable title of "*Magister canum regis pro cervis capiendis*." The Masters of all three packs received 12*d.* per day and certain liveries, and records of some of these payments are preserved in the accounts of the Royal Household. Under each Master was a huntsman whose pay varied from 4*d.* to 7½*d.* a day. It may be noticed, as showing the estimation in which various sports were held, that the Foxhunter and Otter-hunter

received each 2*d.* a day. Under each of the huntsmen were two berners, the berners on foot drawing 1½*d.* a day and those "at Horse" 4*d.* Their duties partook of those of both huntsman and whip, each being responsible for six couple of raches or running hounds which they led in a hardele. The lymerer, who led the lime hound and assisted the huntsman in the important work of harboring the deer, received 2*d.* a day. There was also a fewterer or leader of greyhounds, with three couple of greyhounds, and a berceletar or man in charge of a bercellet or shooting dog; he was armed with a crossbow, and his duties seem to have included the shooting of deer, which were then run down by greyhounds, and also, perhaps, the shooting of a hunted stag at bay. In addition to these there were a number of "cache-chiens" and underlings of various kinds, mostly rated at an obol, or halfpenny a day. Last but not least, there was the larderer at 2*d.* a day, who took charge of and "cured" the venison for the larder.

Such was the establishment over which we find William de Baliolo in charge in 1336. The close Rolls of that year (6 & 7 Edward II.) tell us that John Lovell was "King's Yeoman" at Hunter's Manor—probably a cousin of Margaret Lovell, wife of Sir Thomas Borhunte, who at that time was the hereditary Master. John Lovell was probably huntsman. William de Baliolo was Master of the Hart-hounds and Robert Le Squier of the Harriers. They

received orders to go about the country hunting in the Royal forests. Sometimes the harriers seem to have accompanied the buckhounds, sometimes the harhounds; but apparently all hunted red and fallow deer indiscriminately, and with small regard for season. The directions are sometimes by counties; sometimes the particular forests are mentioned, with the number of deer expected from each. We find John Lovell ordered to hunt in Somerset on December 30th in 1336, but in what forest or how many deer were to be killed, is not stated. The general orders as to staghunting seem to have been issued about July, judging from some dated July 14th and 15th, 1315, which are preserved. These give a complete list of the deer to be killed "in the fat season" in the various forests. We find the total amounted to 322 harts, 302 bucks, and 20 does, while the quota demanded from the county of Somerset was—Exmore, 20 harts; Pederton, 20 bucks; Selwood, 12 bucks; Munedep, 12 harts and 20 bucks. Nothing was demanded from Neroche, which was probably included under Pederton.

How the Master of Game expected three packs, counting the harriers as one, to account for 648 deer in the short staghunting season is not explained. That only a very trifling proportion of them can have been fairly killed by hunting at force is obvious—probably the majority were wounded by the berceletar, and run down by the greyhounds; but even then it is difficult to believe that the number

can have been completed without a considerable amount of local assistance.

The burden of the payment of wages and the provision of food for the men, forage for the horses, and "puture" for the hounds, fell upon the sheriff of the county, as did also in most cases the provision of salt and barrels, and the means of transport to the Royal larder. The Prior of Taunton had to perform this service when the Royal hounds hunted at Petherton.

In some of the long journeys horse litters were provided for transporting the hounds, and wagons where the roads were sufficiently good.

Our ancestors were very skilful in curing meat, and had much practice in the art, as we know that the "beeves" were in most households killed in the autumn for use during the rest of the year. Ginger seems to have been used with the salt. They do not seem, if we may judge from the elaborate directions as to the "unlacing," or cutting up, of a hunted stag and the rewarding of the raches, lime hound, huntsmen, and harbourer, to have made any attempt to preserve any parts except the haunches. In a little sixteenth-century document, "The Craft of Venerie," among the Lansdowne MSS. in the British Museum, we find it laid down as follows :—

"When the harte is taken you shall give the hallowe to the houndes—that is the necke, the hed, the shoulders, and the syde, and the loin shall dwell to the kitchen."

Shakespeare alludes to the process as "powdering" in the First Part of King Henry IV., Act 4, Scene 4, where the Prince of Wales, spying Falstaff shamming dead, says:—

Death hath not struck so fat a deer to-day,
Though many dearer, in this bloody fray,
Embowl'd will I see thee by and by:
Till then in blood by noble Percy lie. (*Exit.*)

FALSTAFF (*Rising up*). Embowelled! If thou embowel me to-day,
I'll give you leave to powder me and eat me too to-morrow.

Allowing for the utmost skill on the part of the larderers, most people would prefer not to be called on to dine on a haunch killed after a hard run in August on Exmoor, and then salted and barrelled and jolted about in the sun by pack-horse and wagon to Windsor, and there stored till required. Even Chicago tinned meat would be preferable.

Such appears to have been an outline of the practice during the fourteenth century, but after that time there is a dearth of authorities, and during the turbulent times when the Houses of York and Lancaster were contending for the mastery, it is impossible to believe that this system can have been regularly adhered to; and as we have no record of the enforcement of forest law by the courts, the conclusion is almost forced upon us that outlying and distant forests, such as Exmoor and Dartmoor, must have been left practically at the mercy of local sportsmen, who no doubt made the most of their opportunities.

We can, it is true, trace, as will be presently shown, the holders of the office of forester in fee of Exmoor without a break till the moor itself became vested in the Sovereign, and the office of forester in fee became extinct, but we cannot find much trace of the exercise of any sporting rights in the district by the Crown, or by anyone acting for the Crown.

Staghunting at force was carried out by these packs when Royalty was present, and by the packs maintained by those great nobles who, like the Mohuns of Dunster, held sporting rights over sufficiently large areas, according to all the precise rules and with all the ceremonial which prevailed in France. Without going deeply into the many books written on the subject, we are fortunate enough to possess in "*The Master of Game*" a complete account of every detail.

"*The Master of Game*" is a translation by Edward, Duke of York, for the instruction of Henry, Prince of Wales, afterwards Henry V., of "*La Livre de Chasse*," by Gaston III., Count de Foix et Béarn, commonly known as Gaston Phœbus, who died in 1391. This great French classic is the foundation on which every subsequent book on hunting is built, except, perhaps, "*La Chasse*," by Charles IX. There are many MS. copies, some of which are beautifully illuminated. Edward, Duke of York, was Master of Game and Forester-in-Chief south of the Trent; he made his translation between 1406 and 1413, changing a few passages of the original and

adding others to make the text consonant with English usage. This Duke of York must have known all about hunting on Exmoor, seeing that he was Lord of the Manor of Cutcombe, which came to him in right of his wife, Philippa Mohun, one of the three daughters of Joan Mohun, who sold the castle and honour of Dunster to Sir Hugh Luttrell.

It is evident, from reading the additions to Gaston's work made by the Duke of York, that he was a very keen staghunter, with a great contempt for any kind of hunting except the proper and legitimate one of hunting at force. This is somewhat to be wondered at, since he was a very fat, heavy man. His extreme weight, coupled with his indomitable spirit, caused his death, for he insisted on leading the English knights in the onslaught at Agincourt; falling, he was unable to rise owing to the weight of his armour, and died of suffocation under the throng of combatants.

A beautiful edition of "*The Master of Game*" has been edited and reduced to readable English by Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Baillie Grohman, and to the text thus rendered accessible, for it was only in MS. before, and to the learned notes the writer is indebted for much information as to mediæval hunting.

We are told in the quaintest of terms how, when the King or a great lord has determined on a day's hunting, the huntsmen should come together the day before, and each make his suggestions as to where to meet and where to draw. The Master then makes

choice between their various propositions and confides the all-important task of harbouring to one of the huntsmen, who forthwith departs with his lymerer to consult the forester of that particular "walk" and visit the feeding grounds. The meeting place is fixed, and the sergeant of the office is to warn all the berners and other officials to be there early. The hunter and lymerer then proceed to harbour the stag, much as we do at the present day, save that we do not use a hound. So great importance is attached to scientific harbouring that "The Master of Game" devotes seven chapters to it, giving elaborate directions for harbouring in high spires or woods, in coppices and "young springs," and when stags are belling. No detail is too small to be explained.

Next morning early the berners and other officers of the household are directed to go to the place of assembly and make ready:—

"All they that come from home, and all the officers that come from home, should bring thither all that they need—everyone in his office well and plenteously. They should lay towells and board cloths all about upon the green grass and set divers meets upon a great platter after the lord's power. And some should eat sitting, and some standing, and some leaning upon their elbows, and some should drink, some laugh and some jangle, some joke and some play—in short do all manner of desport and gladness." Can one not see here the precursor of the mighty picnics yearly taking place at Cloutsham and Haddon?—picnics

which twenty years ago were held at every meet till more expeditious methods of tufting brought them to nought.

In one of the MS. copies of "The Master of Game" is a most amusing illustration, beautifully reproduced in Mr. Baillie Grohman's edition.

The Lord and two friends are seated at a low table covered with a cloth; a screen of canvas, supported by sticks, is drawn round the whole party. At cloths spread on the ground the various retainers eat, and they afford a useful study of table manners without knives and forks: two men are skilfully dismembering a fowl, while others are drinking from the same pattern barrel that a haymaker carries his cider in to the present day. The wines for the high table are in silver flagons and in a long-necked pottery jar with a curious movable handle like that to a "crock," such as one sees in a farmhouse chimney. The use of this is obvious, for they are all cooling in a running stream.

In the middle of the festivity the huntsman arrives, having harboured a stag. To use the words of Gascoigne in "The Blazon of the Hunte"—

Low I crouche before the Lordings all,
Out of my horne the fewmets let I fall,
And other signs and tokens do I tell
To make hope the Harte may like them well.
Then they command that I the wine should taste,
So bids mine Arte and so my throat I baste.

In the picture he has not only let the fewmets or droppings fall, but spread them broadcast over the

Lord's table, while one of the guests of high degree, with a sample in the palm of his hand, explains its peculiar virtues to the Lord.

The "hunte" also produced the scantillon or bit of stick with which he had measured the slot of the hart.

"And everyone shall say, 'Lo, here is a great hart, and is a deer of high meating and pasturing, go we and move him.'"

After a mighty consultation of the learned, the Lord or Master of Game gives the order to go and rouse the hart. The procedure at this point differs somewhat in detail, but not in principle, from the practice at the present day. The Master will determine which hounds shall be finders, that is, go with the hunte and lymerer to rouse the hart, which shall be in the first relay or vanchise, which in the middle relay, and which shall be parfiteurs, and they are then sent to fixed points "by the advice of them that know the country and the flight of the deer." "And then shall the Lord and the Master of Game, if it liketh him better to be at the finding than at a relay, go thither where the deer is harboured." They were to be accompanied by the finders in a hardele in charge of a berner. In the picture they are advancing through fairly open timber, made gay with plentiful foxgloves. The hunte is to set the lymer in the fues or track where the deer entered the covert, and "then shall the Lord, if he can blow, blow three notes, and after him the Master of Game

and after the hunters as they be greatest in office that be at the finding and then the limerer."

There seems to have been some doubt of the Lord's capacity to blow a horn, but none as to the others.

A mote appears to have been a long loud note.

"And after if the lymer shall sue boldly and lustily" (which after all this noisy hornblowing would be rather wonderful) "the lymerer shall say to him loud 'Ho moy, ho moy, hole, hole, hole, and ever take good heed to his feet and look well about him, and so oft as he findeth the fues, or if it be in thick spires, boughs or branches broken where the deer hath walked, he should say aloud 'çy va, çy va, çy va,' and always should the yeoman berner the which is ordained to be the finder follow the lymer and be as near him as he might with the raches that he leadeth for the finding." Then follow elaborate directions for recovering the line if the lymer be at fault. "The lymerer is to cheer him by name, Loyer or Beaumont, or whatever he is named, and when he recovers the fues say "çy va" and "rally."

Though this style of tufting would be very effective in an open forest with big trees, it would be extremely difficult to run the lymer on a liam, which was 20 ft. long of tanned horse hide, through the thick oak scrub in Haddon or the Barle Valley, but to follow with three couple of hounds in a hardele would be utterly impossible.

Hounds in a hardele are at no time very manageable, as anyone will realise who ever saw the second horseman in the Blackmore Vale in Mr. Merthyr Guest's time taking home such puppies as were thought to have done enough.

The nature of the ground would drive the Master of Game to have recourse to the modern system of tufting, of which he expresses disapproval save as a last resort :

" Nevertheless I have seen when a lymer sueth long and could not so soon move him as men would " (we notice that impatience of a long draw then as now was a characteristic of the field) " that they have taken up the lymer and uncoupled one or two hounds to have him sooner found, but this truly no skilful hunter ought to do unless the lymer cannot put it forth " or unless it be getting late.

" When the lymer hath moved him and the lymerer can see him that it is the right deer, he shall blow a note and recheat."

A recheat, of which more hereafter, was a rather complicated combination of long and short notes. If the deer is alone the berner is to uncouple the raches, but if he is not alone, then two hounds were considered sufficient till he should be separated. If the lymerer does not see the hart, but judges by the lair and the fues and other signs that it is the deer which was harboured, " he should blow a recheat without a long mote, for the mote should never be blown before recheating unless a man seeth what he hunteth."

When the raches or running hounds are laid on the lymerer is to take up his lymer and foot it the best way he can. All this is in reality nothing more than tufting adapted to a different country. In a wild country, where there is nowhere to kennel the pack, the system of relays seems almost imperative—and indeed is, in a modified form, constantly practised on Exmoor in the hindhunting.

The directions laid down for the berners and the rest of the field during the run are not what a modern Master would approve—except perhaps for one berner; indeed, they inculcate a course of conduct to which a modern field is only too prone, and one which is sorely trying to the temper both of the huntsman and the Master.

“And the berners also and every horseman go that can go, so that they come not into the fues or in front of the hounds, and shape as often as they can to meet him; and as often as a man can see him he should go to the fues and blow a mote and recheat and holloa to the hounds, and then speed him in the manner that I have said to meet with him again.” The berner in charge of the first relay that the hart runs by is cautioned not to “vaunt lay”—that is, not to lay on his hounds till the others are all up. A very wise precaution, but if there is a chance of change the berner is directed to take up any tail hounds. In the case of a beaten deer the last relay may, we are told, be put close on him to bring him the sooner to bay. If hounds come to a check, or,

as it is called, a "stynt," the hunters on horseback and on foot, in order of right, are to blow the "stynt."

If the hart is "in great danger"—that is to say, if there is a great chance of the pack changing on to fresh deer—it is recommended that they should be stopped, and the lymer sent for to run the true line till they be past the danger. This play has been tried in a modified form with the Devon and Somerset, but the result was not as a rule a success; the pressure on the stag was relaxed, and he at once joined other deer, or had time to betake him to water and give a lot of trouble. At a check, when the lymer even is in fault, "Every hunter that is there ought to go some deal abroad, and see if he can find the rights by vestying thereof, and everyone that findeth it before the lymer had fallen it, should reheat in the rights and blow a mote for the lymer." One sees this constantly done at the present day, only a halloa or the whistle—by those privileged to carry one—is used to call up huntsman and hounds, and many an occasion will come to the memory of old staghunters when the sharp eyes of Miles, of Mr. Froude Hancock, Mr. John Bawden, Mr. Charles Glass, Mr. Clatworthy, and others have saved the situation. Only in 1906 one of the best runs was saved in this way by the whip finding the slot in the road where the stag had turned on the hard road by Lype, leaving hounds to change on to a hind which was in his company.

In the last resort is to be done what we do first,

make a cast with the pack. "And if the hunters hear that the hounds run well and put it forth lustily, they should rout and jopey to them lustily and often and recheat also."

After all the relays are laid on and the hart has been chased and reched through all his "ruses," he comes to water, and after beating the water in vain he stands to bay. "And then as far as it may be heard every man draweth thither, and the knowing therof is which hunter cometh first, and which hunter after the other, they halloa all together and blow a note and recheat all at once." This is the only occasion when they are to blow all together. It would be too much to expect a man with a horn and able to blow it not to do so when the stag is at bay and as to halloaing they seem to have been as fond of doing so then as now. "I know also that it is impossible for those who see a course to avoid halloaing without advice being given for it, since it would almost make a dumb person speak, as is related of the son of Cræsus." There is, however, comfort in the thought that one cannot do much harm by halloaing when the stag is at bay, though it is far otherwise earlier in the run. Truly the troubles of a huntsman were much the same then as now, and the Master of Game recommends that if, when hounds are at a check, anyone is heard halloaing at a distance someone should be sent to see what it is he is halloaing. No doubt it has frequently happened then as now that an excited man knew really nothing

about the deer he had seen, but was always quite sure it was a "tremendous great stag." Many will remember an occasion on the Quantocks when there being a halloa in the road under Lydiard Hill hounds were taken there, though it seemed an unlikely line ; a large party of people in a carriage described the great stag they had seen with detail, if somewhat excitedly, and were quite certain he had a large pair of antlers. As they had every appearance of sanity, the pack was laid on and hunted slowly over a fallow field towards Bishpool. There was a slot in the dusty fallow at which both Anthony and Tucker shook their heads, and not long afterwards hounds ran up to a fine hind. It is wonderful what a lot of people cannot tell the difference between a stag and a hind when they are excited ; therefore the huntsman of to-day, like his predecessor of five hundred years ago, places small reliance on strange halloas.

The Master of Game advises that the stag should be induced to break his bay as often as possible so that he shall not hurt hounds, and any relays not yet laid on may come up before the stag is taken.

When a hunter is lost he should blow the "for-long," another complicated blast, to show that he is lost, and anyone in the rights is to blow the "perfect." "for by that shall he be brought to readiness and comfort who before that did not know where the game or any of his fellows were."

When the bay has lasted long enough the Master of Game, or chief person up, orders someone to go

in and spay the deer, stabbing with a short sword behind the shoulder, forward to the heart, the lymer being let go at him in front to divert his attention. "And when the deer is dead and lieth on his side, then first it is time to blow 'the death.'"

At a time when deer were esteemed almost more for the venison than for the sport, it was not wonderful that great stress should be laid on the proper way of cutting up the dead stag, rewarding the hounds, and distributing the venison—to use the techical term, "undoing him." To cut up a deer otherwise than with all the orthodox ceremonies was considered an outrage unworthy of a good sportsman.

The "Minnesänger" Gottfried von Strasbourg relates that when Tristan was wrecked on the coast of Cornwall he found King Mark's huntsman, who had just killed a stag, about to slit it down the back and divide it into four pieces. Tristan interfered, and instructed him how the work should be done *secundum artem*, and accompanied the King home to feast on the venison, which is the introduction on which the whole romance is based. To kill the stag properly was accounted a great feat, and was duly rewarded by the gift of the head and skin :—

What shall he have who killed the deer ?

The leathern hide and horns to wear.

Even when the deer was taken as in the present day, it was for a long time customary to hand the knife to the most honourable person present—even



After a kill the "slots" (i.e., feet) of the stag are given away.

to a lady—to administer the *coup de grâce*, a practice which called down a strong denunciation from Mr. Pope.

The curée, or rewarding of the hounds with the entrails, was also carried out with much ceremony and blowing of horns, the hounds being kept back till all was ready, and the skin and head spread over the hounds' portion, when at a given signal the skin was whipped off, and the hounds allowed to fall to amid loud cries of "Devour."

Hound language appears to have been, at least in early times, very simple and much akin to that of the present day. We find the harbourer cheering his limehound with "Ho moy, ho moy, ho moy, hola! hola!" We find the huntsman encouraging his hounds with "Çy va, çy va, Beaumont" or "Loyer."

These cries seem from Shakespeare to have been simply rendered in English. We find in *The Tempest* :—

Stage Direction :

A noise of hunters heard. Enter divers spirits in shape of dogs and hounds and hunt them about. Prospero and Ariel setting them on.

PROSPERO. Hey, Mountain, hey!

ARIEL. Silver! there it goes, Silver!

PROSPERO. Fury, Fury! There, Tyrant, there! Hark!

A good deal seems to have been left to individual taste in the matter of hound language, but we are told "A huntsman should speak to his hounds in

the most beautiful and gracious language that he can."

Twici or Twety, huntsman to Edward II., who wrote a short treatise on hunting in Norman French, gives some instances of hound language, among which we find "Oyez a Beaumont, oyez assemble a Beaumont," and also a more elaborate cheer, "Oyez à Beaumont que il quite trouver le coward a la courte cou."

We also come across the familiar tally ho! disguised in various forms. In Hardouin de Fontaines (1394) it appears as "ta ho! ta ho!" The Seneschal of Normandy used "ty hautlau!" Du Fouilloux says "ty a hillaut" signifies a "view." Under whatever form it is clearly the halloa used by huntsman and harbourer in addition to the note and recheat when the harboured stag is roused and viewed, and the "finders" are being uncoupled.

Much more importance was attached to the art of sounding the horn correctly.

In the Middle Ages everyone who went hunting carried a horn and was supposed to be able to blow it. In early times the horn was an ordinary, curved cow's horn. The head or mouth is recommended to be as wide as possible, and the horn cut or driven as thin as possible, nearly to the "fieu" or mouth-piece. Horns were bound round with thread in places, and a covering of green wax was held vastly improving to the tone.

Horns of this kind were only capable of a high

note and a low note, which may be the foundation for the refrain of a rather ribald song in Beaumont and Fletcher's play, *The Beggar's Bush* :—

My horn goes too high, too low, too high, too low.

The various calls depended on the length of the note or sound and the intervals between two sounds. They were naturally of a simple character, and it was not till the introduction of the brass French horn that anything like a tune was practicable.

The old books contain several elaborate sets of directions much too lengthy to be set out here, but it may be of interest to give an insight into the principle of the thing, and set out the calls most in use, such as the *recheat* and those mentioned above.

A *mote* was a single note either long or short, but usually long.

On uncoupling the hounds three *motes* were blown, as we read in Chaucer's "*Dream*" :—

The Mayster hunte anone fote hote,
With his horn blew three *motes*
At the uncoupling of his houndes.

Twici, who sets out a number of calls, expresses them in syllables thus : *trout* for a single long note, *trourourout* for two short notes and a long ; put in the usual symbols, this would be *trout* — *trourourout* ∪ ∪ —.

A *recheat* was *trourourout* three times repeated, thus : ∪ ∪ ∪ —, ∪ ∪ ∪ —, ∪ ∪ ∪ —.

If anyone viewed the deer he blew a *mote* and

recheat thus: — ∪ ∪ ∪ —, ∪ ∪ ∪ —, ∪ ∪ ∪ —.

When hounds were at fault and the huntsman wanted the lymer, he blew a recheat and a mote, thus: ∪ ∪ ∪ —, ∪ ∪ ∪ —, ∪ ∪ ∪ —, —.

If any person caught a view of the stag when hounds were at fault, he blew a mote and recheat for the view, and two motes to call up the hounds.

These calls are in themselves tolerably simple and easily to be understood, but when eight or ten excited sportsmen tried to blow them, one after the other according to the precedence of each, they must have led to endless confusion, especially if any question arose as to precedence. One can realise how it may have come to pass that the black St. Huberts, which, if they were at all like their modern descendants, the bloodhounds, were extraordinarily shy and nervous, utterly declined to cast themselves at a check, sitting down and doing nothing, so that Charles IX. said of them in contempt that they were most useful for anyone with the gout, but not for a man who wanted to shorten the life of a stag.

The forlong was blown by a man who was thrown out, and he seems to have consoled himself with as much of a tune as the horn was capable of: trout, trout, trout, trout, trourouroutrout, trout, and then a recheat, thus: — — — —, ∪ ∪ — —, —, ∪ ∪ ∪ — ∪ ∪ ∪ — ∪ ∪ ∪ —. Anyone hearing him played the parfit, or perfect, to show him where the hounds were: —, — ∪ ∪, — —, — ∪ ∪, — ∪

— — — —, — —, — — — —, repeated three times.

The pryse, which was blown while hounds were being coupled up after the curée, and was the equivalent of the Parliamentary "Who goes home?" was only blown by the chief personage, who blew four notes and then waited half an Ave Maria and then blew four more notes, each a little longer.

Chaucer, who was deputy forester of Exmoor, uses the forlong as a sign that the deer was lost:—

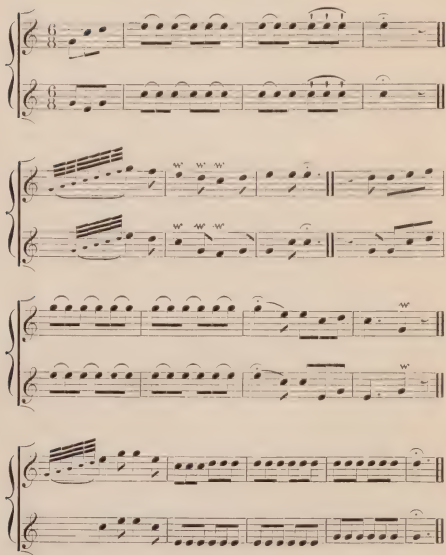
The hart roused and staale away
 For all the houndes a prevy way.
 The houndes had overshot him alle,
 Therewith the hunte wonder faste
 Blew a forlong at the laste.

"Measures of blowing" of marvellous complexity are set out in "Hardouin de Fontaine" and in Blome's "Gentleman's Recreation," but it is difficult to believe that they can ever have been of any practical use in the field.

French horns were introduced at the end of the seventeenth century, and gave more scope, as they allowed of a variation of tone.

The Marquis Dampière, in the time of Louis XIV., composed many "tons de chasse" and fanfares with the notation of ordinary music. M. le Couteulx de Canteleu sets out no less than sixty-nine, some of which are regular tunes with several verses of words to them, and all appear to us very unnecessarily long. The requêté or recheat, one of the simplest, is as follows:—

REQUÊTÉS or RECHEAT.



The Master of Game describes in graphic terms the joy which the huntsman feels at every phase of the chase, particularly in noting the work of individual hounds, and says: "And when all the hounds

shall have passed before him then shall he rout and blow as loud as he may with great joy and great pleasure, and I assure you he thinketh of no other sin and no other evil. And when the hart be overcome and be at bay he shall have pleasure. And after when the hart is spayed and dead he undoeth and maketh his curée and suquerreth or rewardeth his hounds, and so he shall have great pleasure and when he cometh home he drinketh joyfully, for his lord hath given him to drink of his good wine at the curée, and when he doth come home he shall doff his clothes and his shoes and his hose, and shall wash his legs and his thighs and peradventure his whole body. And in the meantime shall order well his supper with wortes and of the neck of the hart, and of other good meats and of wine and ale. And then he shall take the air in the evening of the night for the great heat that he hath had. And then shall he go and drink and lie in his bed in fair fresh clothes, and shall sleep well and stedfastly all the night without any evil thoughts of any sins, wherefore I say that hunters go into paradise when they die and live in this world more joyfully than any other men."

Ceremony has gradually passed away, but we see in these old accounts, which are reproduced and enlarged and commented on by many writers both in French and English, such as Charles IX., Du Fouilloux, Turberville, and others, that all the essential principles have been preserved to the present day. Nothing new has been or can be

written about hunting—not even a joke in *Punch*. Everyone knows *Punch's* huntsman who complained on a hot April day that hounds could not hunt “with all they nasty, stinkin’ wi’lets about,” but few have read the lines written five centuries before: “Also in that time the herbs be best and flowers in their smelling, each one in their kind, and when the hounds hope to scent the beast they hunt the sweet smelling of the herbs takes the scent of the beast from them.”

Old and valuable as are the maxims handed down to us by Edward, Duke of York, they do not form the oldest account of a staghunt at force.

There has always been a tradition in Somersetshire that King Alfred—at least, that is the writer's recollection of the legend as told him when a small boy—nearly lost his life staghunting on Mendip by riding over the edge of the Cheddar Cliffs.

For years it was no more than a legend, but at length that indefatigable body, the Somersetshire Record Society, undertook an examination of the records of the old borough of Axbridge, where the Saxon kings undoubtedly had a borwe, or hunting lodge. The legend turns out to be true, except that instead of Alfred it was his grandson Edmund who so nearly lost his life. An old manuscript tells the story in most graphic terms:—

“When they reached the woods they took various directions among the sylvan avenues; and lo, from the varied noise of the horns, and the barkings of the

dogs many stags began to fly about. From these the King, with his pack of hounds, selected one for his own hunting, and pursued it long through devious ways with great agility on his horse, and with the dogs following. In the vicinity of Ceoddir (Cheddar) were several abrupt and lofty precipices hanging over profound declivities. To one of these the stag came in his flight, and dashed himself down the immense depth with headlong ruin, all the dogs following and perishing with him. The King, pursuing the animal and hounds with equal energy, was rushing onward towards the precipice; he saw his danger and struggled violently to stop his courser; the horse disobeyed awhile his rein; he gave up the hope of life; he recommended himself to God and his saints, and was carried to the very brink of destruction before the speed of the animal could be checked. The horse's feet were trembling on the last turf of the precipice before he stopped."

Can we not imagine the King waiting impatiently with his "relay" of hounds while the lymerer and huntsman roused the stags? Of course, the King was put in the most likely spot, and, of course, the good stag came by him. Was it likely an impatient monarch would wait for the field? No doubt he blew motes and recheats and halloaed, but he laid his hounds on, and chanced the rest catching him up as he swept along—probably above Charterhouse Warren—heading for the big woods on the north slope of the hills. One can imagine him swinging

round by Green Ore, avoiding the old lead works by Priddy, and then heading due west over the best stretch of galloping turf in England. Mile after mile he would sweep on with nothing to stop him—not a covert in sight but the little coppices in the combe by Westbury, and the broad marshes of Somerset stretching miles away to the Severn Sea eight hundred feet below him. One cannot, it is true, hunt the stag here to-day, but the Wells Harriers can and do cross this glorious stretch of country at racing pace, as the writer can testify. Can one not imagine the King letting his good horse go his own pace, revelling in the joys of the gallop? A slight rise is in front of him, and as he reaches the top, a short downward slope of the smoothest and slipperiest of turf leads down to the gorge of Cheddar—five hundred feet of sheer precipice. The first hurried snatch at the reins no doubt produces nothing more than a fling of the head and a little increase of pace; but the King is a horseman, and takes a sturdy, resolute pull. The horse sees his danger, but he is going fast, and not even a trained polo pony could turn on that slope, and it is only by a frantic effort, ending in a prolonged slide, that he stops on the very brink, forelegs extended, and hindlegs doubled up and crouched under him.

Such is the tale as it comes down to us. Does it throw any light on the method of hunting in those days? I think it does. We must remember that the King was the person who was doubtless meant to

have the best view of the deer and the best start ; yet he does not accompany the huntsman to rouse the deer ; he apparently takes the first " relay " to the spot where the stag is likely to cross, while the huntsman and others take the " finders," or tufters, to rouse the stag. We note from " The Master of Game " that this is where he expects the great person to go. That they found several stags, and blew horns and halloaed ; that the King in his impatience laid on to the wrong stag, or merely vauntlayed, is simply an incident. We have the main features of a staghunt. A stag had clearly been harboured, otherwise the huntsman would not have known where to draw, or where to place the King ; secondly, we have the stag roused by tufters, and then the pack laid on. The details may differ, but we can there trace the same principles acted on by King Edmund a thousand years ago as are acted on by the Master of the Devon and Somerset stag-hounds to-day.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PACK.

Two dogs of black Saint Hubert's breed,
Unmatch'd for courage, breath, and speed,
Fast on his flying traces came.

SCOTT (*The Lady of the Lake*).

ONE cannot help wondering with what hounds our ancestors hunted the stag in the middle ages, how they were bred, and how they would compare for size, nose, and pace with the modern hound. In this, as in so much relating to staghunting, there is but little to help one, and one is driven to eke out the small amount of information derived from old writers by pure conjecture.

Britain was celebrated for its hounds even before the Christian era, and, according to Gratius (B.C. 17), though having little in the way of looks to commend them, yet when hard work and courage were wanted they were equal to the wonderful dogs of Molossus. Strabo notes them as being exported to Gaul on account of their excellence in the chase. Oppian, in his "Cynegaticon" (book i., 468), writing in A.D. 264, says: "There is beside an excellent kind of scenting dogs, though small yet worthy of

estimation. They are bred by the fierce nation of painted Britons, who call them Agassæus; in size they resemble worthless greedy house dogs that gape under tables. They are crooked, lean, coarse haired, and dull eyed, but armed with powerful claws and deadly teeth. The Agassæus is of most excellent nose, not only sagacious in finding the track of animals, but skilful to discover the aerial odour."

Our Saxon and Danish forefathers probably brought some hounds with them when they settled in the country, and these crossed with the indigenous race—the Agassæi—formed the hounds with which they hunted up to the time of the Norman Conquest.

The Normans no doubt introduced hounds from France, hounds which, as we have seen, contained an admixture of British blood. At this time, and for several centuries afterwards, France was the acknowledged home of hunting, and the source from which all hunting lore sprang. And although it may seem certain that hounds in England still contained a strong basis of indigenous blood, it is to France one must look to see what strains were in most repute for hunting, and therefore would be the most likely to be imported into this country.

The earliest authentic information on this subject is derived from the MS. work of Gaston de Foix, the illustrations to which have been admirably reproduced by Mr. and Mrs. Baillie Grohman in their beautiful edition of "The Master of Game."

From them and from the text we can gain some ideas as to the "raches," or running hounds which were then used for hunting at force.

In the frontispiece we see Gaston de Foix seated, surrounded by all kinds of sporting dogs, greyhounds, alaunts, prick-eared brutes whose looks justify all the bad things the Duke of York had to say for them, the obvious ancestors of the coarse butchers' dogs shown in old pictures of bull-baiting and bear-baiting; there are also heavy round-headed dogs which may represent the ancestors of the present mastiffs, and one which probably is intended for a bloodhound, in addition to which are dogs which are obviously hounds, in the modern acceptance of the word, of two sizes which no doubt represent the raches and kennets or harriers. The rache is represented by the artist as mostly white, with various markings which differ somewhat in colour, though the writer of the text says tan is the best colour; they are fairly deep through the heart, but are leggy and light of bone, with moderately good necks and heads, but with ridiculously short noses and the upper lip hanging down in an exaggerated manner. Their loins and flanks are weak, and the whole of the hindquarters reminds one strongly of a pointer. The raches are all represented as smooth-coated hounds. This type of hound is, with some variations, reproduced in all the other pictures illustrating the various scenes in hunting described in the MS. On reading the text one cannot help

feeling that the artist, then as now, did not always reproduce what the writer intended. The depicting of animals in a manner true to nature is an art of modern development, as may be seen by looking at the horses and hounds in pictures of the early part of the last century, and the caricatures which do duty as portraits of some of the early celebrities on the turf. In spite of the iteration of the same adjective one can realise better from the text what manner of hound the great French sportsman had in mind.

"A running hound should be well born and well grown of body, and should have great nostrils and open, and a long snout but not small, and great lips and well hanging down, and great eyes red or black, and a great forehead and great head, and large ears well long and well hanging down, broad and near the head, a great neck, great breast and shoulders, and great legs and strong and not too long, and great feet, round, and great claws and the feet a little low, small flanks and long sides and good chine bone and great back, good thighs and great hind legs, and the hocks straight and not bowed, the tail great and high and not crompting upon the back, but straight and a little crompting upward."

One may, perhaps, demur to the small flanks and long sides, but the writer clearly had a hound in his mind not far removed in general characteristics from the hounds of to-day.

It is worthy of note in connection with description

that a lightness of loin and lengthy flat sides are the criticisms generally passed on the old pack of stag-hounds which were sold in 1825, as represented in the picture in the "The Chase of the Wild Red Deer."

Nothing is said in "The Master of Game" as to the size of these hounds, and the drawings are not sufficiently trustworthy to enable one to form more than a rough guess by comparing them with the men, horses, and other dogs portrayed. The raches are considerably smaller than the alaunts and mastiffs, and shorter on the leg, as well as less long in the body than the greyhounds, one of which, in one of the numerous monochrome reproductions, is apparently grey, with a long coat like a Scottish deerhound. Assuming the height of men to be about normal, and that of horses to be from 14.2 to 15 hands, which Mr. Dale, in his learned and convincing work on polo ponies, asserts is the normal stature of a horse, the raches would appear to have stood somewhere about 24 to 25 in.

The Comte le Couteulx de Canteleu enumerates and describes seventeen distinct breeds of French hounds, ancient and modern, but says he agrees with Charles IX. in his "Traité de Chasse": "que toutes les races de chiens courants venaient des quatre races royales: St. Hubert; grands chiens blancs du roi; chiens fauves de Bretagne; chiens gris de St. Louis." Which of these breeds is the nearest to the "raches" represented in Gaston de

Foix's MS. cannot be said with certainty, but probably they were Normandy hounds, a subdivision of the St. Huberts.

We may dismiss the chiens fauves de Bretagne and the chiens de St. Louis, as we know both to have been rough-coated like a Welsh hound—the former a dark tan, and the latter wolf-grey. The chiens gris are described as having been fast, but to have had bad noses and to have been liable to change. This is practically the character given by the Comte le Couteulx de Canteleu to the modern English fox-hound. The fallow hounds must, on the contrary, have had good noses, been very staunch, and possessed of immense hardness and staying powers if the wonderful performances with which they are credited really took place—namely, that they ran a stag from the forest of Ponthièvre (250 miles) to Paris in four days. When one reads of these marvellous doings one cannot help wondering what their feeding arrangements were.

The "grands chiens blancs du roi" did not exist at the time Gaston de Foix wrote, so we are driven to the conclusion that the hounds he writes of are white St. Huberts crossed with some other breed. The black St. Hubert is unquestionably the ancestor of the modern bloodhound, while the white variety is said to have been the source of the English Talbot hound, long since extinct.

The origin of the "grands chiens blancs du roi," or "greffiers" as they were commonly called,

is well known. A poor Norman gentleman presented King Louise XII. (1482 to 1498) with a white St. Hubert hound, but the King preferred his kennel of "chiens gris" and passed on the gift to his seneschal, who passed it on again to Jacques de Brézé, Seneschal of Normandy, who appreciated his superlative excellence, for this was the famous hound Souillard from whom it was said no stag could escape. He was crossed with an Italian bitch belonging to the King's greffier or secretary, and bred thirteen puppies, all as good as himself, and Charles IX. says that by the time of Francis I., which would be 1515, the breed of greffiers, as they were called, was thoroughly established. These and the Normandy hounds seem to have practically superseded the St. Huberts as hunting hounds altogether.

They must have been of immense size, as the St. Huberts stood from 27 in. to $31\frac{1}{2}$ in. high, though possibly their stature may have been reduced by the Italian cross, as we find the Normandy hounds, also a cross breed, are stated to have been 26 in. to 30 in. in height, whether that were so or not they seem to have merited the specific title of "grands."

What essential differences there may have been between the Normandy hounds and the greffiers, or as they were afterwards called the Vendéens, is not clear, except that the former had more colour marking, the latter having nothing but a very little lemon colour or hare-pied marking.

It would seem probable that these two breeds must have been largely introduced into England, and that from their cross with existing hounds must have been derived the animal so frequently referred to as the great Southern hound. I have been quite unable to find any contemporary description of the Southern hound which throws any real light on his peculiarities. Yet he is generally supposed to have been the stock from which the English staghounds were bred, and also to have shared with the Northern hound the honour of helping to found the modern race of foxhounds.

The Southern hound is said to have been bred to hunt on foot with, and to have been very slow. We know that hunting at force was not in favour with Henry VIII. and Elizabeth, who preferred hunting in inclosed parks, and probably very slow, tunable hounds came into fashion.

Shakespeare's works are full of references to hunting, but the only one which at all bears on the point is the oft-quoted passage from Act IV. of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* :—

THESEUS (*log.*):

My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,
So flewed, so sanded, and their heads are hung
With ears that sweep away the morning dew;
Crook-kneed, and dew-lapped like Thessalian bulls;
Slow in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells,
Each under each.

This does not help us much, as the description might apply to anything, from a dachshund upwards,

and the only thing worth mentioning is that he lays stress on three of the points noticed by Gaston de Foix : "so flewed," which is, so the glossaries tell us, with long pendant lips ; "so sanded," which refers to the tan or yellow-coloured markings, and the description of the ears, which speaks for itself. It is clear from the context that Theseus had no intention of following the hounds himself, for, after sending for the forester, he says :—

We will, fair queen, up to the mountain's top,
And mark the musical confusion
Of hounds and echo in conjunction.

This is not altogether unknown at the present day.

However useful they may have been in parks, it is quite clear they would have been unable to cope with the red deer of Exmoor.

Whatever may have been the case in other parts of England, hounds were kept, according to universally accepted tradition, at Simonsbath during the reign of Queen Elizabeth (1598) by one Hugh Pollard, who was deputy-forester of Exmoor. These hounds presumably were descended from one or other of the French breeds named, with perhaps an admixture of English blood, but they must, to have been any use on Exmoor, have had a certain amount of pace.

James I. took much trouble to reinstate the good old customs of staghunting at force, and sent for huntsmen from France to instruct their English brethren. Probably at the same time hounds were

imported, and as the demand for speed arose, no doubt even the Southern hounds were bred for pace to meet the demand, just as foxhounds were when the custom of riding better-bred and faster horses necessitated increased pace in the hounds.

That the Southern hound was a recognised breed, separate from the foxhound, as late as 1749, is proved in Beckford's "*Thoughts on Hunting*," published in that year, the only book of the period which deals authoritatively with the science of fox-hunting. He speaks of a pack which was all shapes and sizes, yet killed a goodly proportion of foxes, and adds that they ran in a string, and that when in difficulties the fault was always made good by an old Southern hound. He mentions this as if the Southern hound was then a perfectly well-known and recognised breed.

Such being the hounds existing in England at this period, we cannot help wondering from what source was derived the grand old pack which for something, we believe, like two centuries or more showed such wonderful sport in Somerset and Devon. We have no description of the pack at that time, the earliest being contained in Dr. Collyns's "*Chase of the Wild Red Deer*," which describes them as they were before being sold in 1825. Dr. Collyns says he is unable to trace their exact origin, but they had been in the county for years, and had been bred with the utmost care for the purpose of stag-hunting. He says :—

"The bloodhound and the old Southern hound were, beyond doubt, amongst the ancestors of the pack which, when sold, consisted of about thirty couple. In height the hounds were about 26 to 28 inches; colour generally hare-pied, with long ears, deep muzzles, large throats, and deep chests. In tongue they were perfect, and when hunting in the water, or on a half scent, or when baying a deer they might be heard at an immense distance. Even when running at speed they always gave plenty of tongue, and their great size enabled them to cross the long heather and rough, sedgy pasturage of the forest without effort or difficulty."

Such is the only detailed, written description of them which, so far as the writer knows, is extant.

The great difficulty at first sight is the size: 26 to 28 inches is a standard which hardly seems credible, though it would be rash to say what could not be done by two hundred years' careful breeding. The very few people who actually remembered the old pack, with whom the writer has talked, had no very clear recollection on the subject, but from their accounts the hounds seem to have been undoubtedly bigger and longer-bodied than the modern pack; this is fully borne out by the picture of two hounds of the old pack in the possession of Dr. John Collyns, of Dulverton.

The phrase Southern hound is used in such an indefinite way by many writers that too much reliance should not be placed on Dr. Collyns's

assertion that it was one of the ancestors of the staghound pack, though probably almost any pack of staghounds in England would contain some of that blood.

The Comte le Couteulx de Canteleu says :—
“ Mais je crois que la dernière vieille meute de staghounds proprement dits (qui avaient beaucoup de sang Normand) était l'ancienne meute de Devon et Somerset, vendue pour l'Autriche en 1827.” M. de Canteleu's learned work was published in 1890, and one cannot help wondering how he got his information save from Dr. Collyns's book. But in the same book he publishes a picture of the Vendéen hounds, now nearly extinct, which, as we have seen, are the descendants of the “grands chiens blancs du roi” and of their celebrated ancestor Souillard. No one, I think, putting this picture alongside that of the hounds of the old pack in Dr. Collyns's book, can doubt for a moment that they represent substantially the same breed. This is further borne out when we come to read the description of them :
“ Très grands, blancs, a poil très ras et fin, quelques tâches très pâles, jaunâtres, la tête nerveuse, l'oreille longue et attachée bas, souple et mince, la queue longue, fine et effilée, le rein bien fait, assez de cuisse, ils ont la poitrine peu profonde et ne descendant pas assez bas.”

Here we get the size and colouring, the only difference being as to the depth of chest. The description goes on to say that they are good hunters,

and very keen, questing and trying with gaiety and diligence, with good noses and clever at a fault, not afraid of too much heat, but very susceptible to cold.

The latter is a striking peculiarity, since we know that the old staghounds stopped hunting during the winter months on account of the cold water.

The great fault of the modern Vendéen hound is his want of staying power: "*Très vites pendant la première heure, ils s'étouffent assez facilement.*" This may be modern degeneracy; it certainly was not characteristic of the old staghounds.

Though we may well believe that the descendants of Souillard were the main stem from which the staghounds were derived, there cannot be the least doubt that they had been frequently crossed with other breeds—in fact, we know such to have been the case.

In 1800 the necessity for fresh blood was realised, and a draft of large foxhounds from various kennels was added to the pack.

According to Lord Graves, who had the pack for one year in 1812, the method of breeding the then existing pack was both curious and painstaking. As the method took some years to produce a working hound, the recipe he handed on to his successor (Lord Fortescue) was presumably based on the tradition handed down to him by his predecessors.

It is set out in Lord Ebrington's able article in the "Fur and Feather" series:—

"*First cross*.—Put a thoroughbred heavy staghound dog to some thoroughbred foxhound bitch. This is not yet the breed required.

"*Second cross*.—Put the bitches, the product of the first cross, when fifteen months old to a thoroughbred staghound dog, and to some thoroughbred staghound bitches put those dogs the product of the first cross which are most promising. The product of the last cross is the sort required. After a few years, should a cross be required from another kennel, which is very necessary, cross with a sharp staghound, but by no means with a foxhound."

The use of the term "thoroughbred" here is somewhat misleading, as none of a kennel bred on these lines could really be considered "thoroughbred." The last advice is also curious, and must have been traditionary, for at the time he wrote there were not, it is believed, any other staghounds, bred as such, in England. The Royal hounds were at this time mostly of foxhound origin, and so were probably the Earl of Derby's hounds, which, to judge from the well-known print, cannot have exceeded 24 or $24\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

There was, however, in Ireland a pack of staghounds (the Cahirelly) belonging to Mr. Michael Furwell, which were hunting in Limerick as late as 1833, and a run with them of upwards of twenty miles is described by a correspondent of the *New Sporting Magazine* of March in that year. They are described as follows :—

"Those hounds are generally white and of immense

size, standing about 25 inches and often weighing individually from six to eight stone; very deep-toned and heavy hung; the only kennel of the kind in Ireland, and so tender is the breed as to make it almost impossible to be kept up, and could only be done in that very fertile part of the country which is designated the *Golden Vein*." A picture of these hounds running a stag hangs in the dining-room at Carass, the home in Limerick of Sir David Roche, Bart.

The task of keeping up on Exmoor thirty couple of the right sort, which was the strength of the pack in those days, must have been immense, for it is impossible to believe that more than, at the outside, 60 per cent. would attain the minimum standard of 26 inches laid down by Dr. Collyns, and fewer still the mean of 27 inches, while only a few giants can ever have grown to 28 inches. The average height of the present pack is about 25 inches. It is a strain on one's belief to imagine a pack averaging 27 inches, and if such a pack, with the same quality, dash, and drive as the present pack, were put in the field, they would show no sport; for no deer could stand up before them and no horse could live with them.

It is true that the late Lord Wolverton for some years hunted a pack of bloodhounds in Dorsetshire which are said to have averaged 27 inches, but opinions differ as to their pace. The writer never saw them, but as a boy he met many who had been out with them. Sometimes they seem to have run

away from everyone, but at others they seemed to have little pace and dash, and if horses pressed on them at all they seemed to become too nervous to try to hunt.

The writer has tried to trace, however imperfectly, the different breeds from which the old pack may have been originally derived, and has tried to point out which seem most likely, but he is fain to admit that it is pure speculation, though, he ventures to think, an interesting subject for speculation.

The Southern hound was abandoned as a probable source with reluctance, on account of the positive assertion of Dr. Collyns, but the information about that breed is too vague, and such as there is, is so utterly at variance with the type of the old pack that it seems impossible for it to have been the main stock. Youatt describes it as a big, heavy hound, but his picture is utterly unlike the old staghounds, while M. de Canteleu, who classes it as among existing English breeds, makes it something between a small harrier and a large beagle.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PACK (*continued*).

Here's to the hound
With his nose upon the ground.

WHYTE MELVILLE.

Yelled on the view the opening pack.
SCOTT (*Lady of the Lake*).

THE question as to how the old pack which under the Aclands, Bassets, Fortescues, Chichesters, and others showed such excellent sport in the latter half of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, compared with the hounds of the present day, is an interesting if somewhat difficult one, but an inquirer has the advantage of a certain number of records which throw some light on the matter.

The unavoidable conclusion which must be drawn from the evidence, in spite of all assertion to the contrary, must be that the modern pack is a good deal faster than the old pack, but how much faster it is impossible to estimate.

In the appendix to Dr. Collyns's book are the accounts of a series of great runs taken mostly from the diary of Parson Boyse, of Withypool. They contain frequent references to the pace, to horses

being exhausted, and to very few being in at the finish, just as we find in accounts of runs to-day, but pace is comparative, and one must bear in mind the state of the country and also the class of horse ridden at that period before one can accept the statement that a run was fast. All hounds that run away from horses are fast. There is unfortunately no case in which it is possible to check the pace by the clock over any defined distance. The time of several runs is given, but the ground traversed is not sufficiently accurately described to enable us to make any trustworthy calculation. It must also be remembered that many of these accounts refer to a period when a great change was taking place in English hunting, and Mr. Childe, of Kinlet Hall, Shropshire, was setting a fashion in the matter of pace, which is said to have often roused the ire of Mr. Hugo Meynell, whose pack he followed. The example of riding better bred horses and galloping at the fences was speedily followed in the shires and spread all over England, and hounds were everywhere bred for pace to enable them to hold their own, but how early the effect of this innovation was felt on Exmoor we cannot tell. Accounts of big runs, both ancient and modern, must be taken *cum grano salis*. An experience of over twenty years in endeavouring faithfully to recount the runs of the Devon and Somerset Staghounds in the *Field* has convinced the writer of the extreme temptation there is to exaggerate the merits of a real good run, which

one has enjoyed, if one sits down to write about it while the glamour is still on one, and the large percentage by which an original estimate is reduced by the stern logic of compasses, map, and measuring wheel.

Anyone who reads through a series of the runs recorded in the *Old Sporting Magazine* and publications of that date will realise that this tendency rather ran wild, and will be driven, if he accepts all the statements, to the conclusion that the hounds of those days—the early part of the nineteenth century—were at least 30 per cent. faster than anything Leicestershire can produce to-day.

The reverend chronicler of the doings of the staghounds cannot be absolutely acquitted of possessing the same tendency, for a careful examination of the runs recorded by him will show that some of his estimates of distance were exceedingly wild. On September 13th, 1804, hounds found a stag in Chargot Wood near Luxborough, and ran it *via* Raleigh's Cross and Chipstable to Highleigh Weir on the Exe below Wonham. A fine run, said to have lasted five hours and forty minutes, but the most liberal allowance for doubling about cannot stretch the distance to fifty-five miles. If the distance had been fifty-five miles they never would have covered it in five hours and forty minutes. The general impression derived, however, from reading these records with the map beside one is that they are on the whole unusually

accurate and trustworthy. The absence of maps—for most of these accounts are older than the publication of the first Ordnance Survey, and that was filled with amazing blunders—is quite sufficient to account for a large amount of exaggeration as to distance.

As far as one can judge the old pack must have been pretty much what one would have expected them to be from the description of them.

They seem to have lobbed along over the open—especially where there was bad going for horses—at a considerable pace, but to have lost a lot of time in covert—hard oak scrub must have been well-nigh impassable to hounds of that size.

They probably looked to be going very slowly as they strung along in file through deep heather, solemnly flinging their tongues, but one is accustomed to hear the same criticism of the modern pack from strangers accustomed to a $23\frac{1}{2}$ or 24 inch standard. It is clear, however, that they must have slipped along at a respectable pace, because they killed their deer on quite a fair proportion of the days they went out; because also these records show that on a really good day they ran away from the great majority of the riders, and because the records of some of the runs, to which no taint of exaggeration appears to attach, would be a credit to any pack of hounds. For example:—

August 22nd, 1790. Found in Haddon and laid on above Storridge. “He went up the bottom to

Foxhanger and through Pickets Hill for Stoverd Hill"—this would be mostly open but rather rough going in places—"and then through the enclosure to Stone in Exton, and then over Witheridge Farm to the Quarne water under Upcott, and broke over the Poorsland for the Exe, which he took just above the Vicarage house"—Winsford Vicarage—"and went up the river to Larcombe Foot; now broke to the right as if making for the Horner coverts"—a good many miles off—"but before reaching Staddon Hill turned to the left and again crossed the Exe above Nethercott for Kirkcleeve, and then beat up to Exford and lay fast in a small covert above the village. He was here fresh found, and hounds ran him in view to Cloven Rocks on Exmoor. He now backed it to the left for Cow Castle, and beat down the Barle to Landacre Bridge, and then to Withypool; broke from the river at Bradley Ham, and crossed it for Winsford Hill. The hounds viewed him at least three miles over the hill to Redcleeve, and at this late part of the run many a horse was pulled up. He now descended to the Exe once more, never again to leave it; beat down to Chilly Bridge, at which place he was killed after a chase of over four hours." Now every twist and turn in this run can be worked out, because nearly the whole way the deer followed the line of a water-course, little or big, until he made his last desperate dash from Barle to Exe. The distance, as nearly as the writer can measure it up, must have been about thirty miles—perhaps thirty-two.

This was said to have been accomplished in "over four hours," which probably means anything under five hours. This is just the sort of line where hounds might do a distance of this sort in good time, because it was over land at that time almost entirely unenclosed ; it was rough, grassy land, not heather, and it hardly touched a covert all the way, certainly nothing to cause a check or to stop the pace. There was hardly a chance of rousing fresh deer, and it is extremely probable that they ran the whole way without more of a check than would be due to hunting the water. It is the time lost in checks that throws out all estimates based on the pace at which one seemed to be galloping, and hounds which have the luck to run on without checking may easily cover more distance when going at quite a moderate pace than is accomplished by a series of bursts at top speed. Whatever may have been their luck on this occasion, to have covered the ground specified in anything between four and five hours, they must have been going quite a good pace for a great part of the distance. This run exactly illustrates what was probably the difference between the old pack and the new ; the old pack ran a good pace, quite as fast, perhaps, as the present pack would have done, till the deer broke away over Winsford Hill. The old pack, evidently unable to increase their pace, ran him in view to Red Cleeve, a matter of three miles. No stag, as nearly run up as this one must have been, could possibly have stood up with the modern

pack racing him in view for three miles; he would be rolled over before he had gone a mile.

Many of the other records tell the same tale, but on the other hand there are various facts which tell the other way, and show a deficiency of that speed and drive, possessed by the present pack, which are necessary to give the hounds a decisive advantage over a deer. They were obviously unable to cope with a hind during the winter months, at all events they did not do so. The records show a few days' hind hunting took place in October, and then hunting was stopped till April and continued until well on into May, and sometimes even later, much later than has been done of late years, even when the necessity to reduce the numbers of the herd was most imperative.

To kill a hind in December, January, and February needs a pack which can drive her along persistently at a pace sufficient to try her wind and bring her blown to the water. A hind is not over burdened with fat, and if she is not pressed, but can get a chance to stop now and again and catch her wind, is capable of running almost from daylight till dark. Even more than with a stag it is the drive which kills.

The coldness of the rivers in the winter was, it is true, alleged as the reason for discontinuing hunting, and if the pack was bred from the delicate Vendéen hounds, as seems probable, this may have had a good deal to do with it; but experience with the modern pack for many years has shown the mischief

to be greatly exaggerated, though it is quite possible that if the pack was more dead beat than the hind by the time she came to water a prolonged immersion might have some ill-effect. But all these theories as to pace are confirmed by the old saying that if you hunted a young stag you only knocked up men, hounds, and horses, and did not kill your deer. The hounds of to-day can run up a deer of any age, within a reasonable time, without putting an undue strain upon themselves, though occasionally they reduce all the horses to a standstill.

To the account of the great Satterleigh Marsh run, indubitably the best run with a stag that has ever been recorded, there are appended the words: "This was only a four-year-old deer, which accounts for his running such a distance." This run was on October 3rd, 1815. The stag was found in the head of Hollow Combe, above Sweet Tree, and the pack laid on by Langcombe Head. The line lay by Larkbarrow, Pinford, Honeymead, Cow Castle, over the South Forest, Filedon Ridge, Darlick Enclosures, Longwood, North Molton Church, to Vennwood Bottom where the first check occurred. Then to Castle Hill Park and to water, where a long check occurred. The stag was reported to be three-quarters of an hour ahead, which shows the check and the delay in hunting the water must have taken up much time. Mr. Boyse, who seems to have cast himself forward down the stream got a view of the stag coming back, and hounds being laid on they

ran him down the valley to Satterleigh Marsh and killed. Only seven out of over two hundred were at the finish, and small wonder, for the first gallop from Langcombe Head to North Molton would be calculated to settle most horses.

Even admitting, as I think must be done, that the old pack was not as fast as the modern one, there is no doubt that they were fast enough to kill deer, and there is no doubt they did for many years show most excellent sport and kept stag-hunting alive at a time when it would otherwise have died out.

It was a great loss to the country when they were sold in 1825 to go abroad, where it is believed that their descendants, crossed with all manner of foreign dogs, still pursue their old game.

From the time when the old pack went abroad the stag has been hunted by draft foxhounds, and the staghound as a breed has been utterly extinct in England. During the troublous times prior to the Mastership of Mr. M. Fenwick Bisset, in 1856, who laid the foundation for the present prosperous condition of stag-hunting, various packs of draft foxhounds took the field and several Masters accustomed to hunt the carted deer "up the country" brought their hounds down to try conclusions with the wild deer, the result being as a rule to show how much more difficult the wild animal is to hunt than the tame one, but all these packs were essentially foxhounds by breeding.

Mr. Bisset had no other source to go to though he

had the advantage of a few couple of entered hounds from the Royal pack. With infinite skill and labour he collected a pack whose work in the field was all that could be desired, and whose looks on the flags would have been a credit to any pack in the country. Suddenly twenty years of labour was brought to nought, for rabies appeared among them, and after fruitless efforts to stamp out the disease by means of segregating all those hounds which were supposed to have been exposed to contagion, a work of no small risk to those carrying it out, the determination was reluctantly arrived at that the pack must be destroyed. This was carried out to the great grief of all concerned, the only survivor being a young hound, Wellington, who had been away at Bagborough in consequence of an accident.

The courage and perseverance which had enabled Mr. Bisset to overcome the obstacles which had seemed well-nigh insuperable when he took the hounds originally, enabled him to get together in an extraordinary short time a new pack with which he hunted in 1878. There were, it is true, troubles arising from riot, and particularly from sheep, but Arthur Heal, at that time in his prime, was very capable of dealing with trouble of this kind, for he was by nature one of those men whom hounds instinctively obey, and he had a marvellous knack of always being at the exact spot where his active intervention was required. The pack which Mr. Bisset handed over to the committee, after twenty-six years of

successful mastership, was in every way worthy of the sport and of the country. Mr. Bisset was succeeded by Viscount Ebrington, and he in turn by Mr. Basset, each of whom held office for six seasons; Colonel Hornby, who was at the head of affairs for two years; and Mr. R. A. Sanders, whose term of twelve years has been marked by a very high average of sport. All of these have adhered to the practice of relying on big draft foxhounds drawn from all the best packs in the country. The standard is $24\frac{1}{2}$ inches for puppies on entry. This gives a standard for second season hounds and upwards of 25 inches, or rather more. The maintenance of this standard has two special advantages. Firstly, the larger hounds have an undoubted advantage over their smaller brethren in deep heather and in hunting the water; and, secondly, Masters of Foxhounds naturally refuse to part with puppies of the highest quality which are not too big for foxhound packs. Were it not for the size we should not find on the benches at Exford, as we do now, puppies out of the same litters that have achieved honours at Peterborough, and made for themselves reputations for good work in the best packs in the country. Mr. Sanders has, however, recently introduced a few large bitches into the pack in the hope of improving the cry, in which they have been to a certain extent successful, and a few puppies have been bred with promising results, two home-bred puppies being in 1906 among the speediest in the pack.

The quality and appearance of the pack undoubtedly depend to a great extent on their size. "How on earth do you get them this size and looking so much alike?" is a question one often hears asked; and indeed none but a trained hound man would ever detect that they are a draft pack. The answer is that it is due to the knowledge, industry, and judicious liberality of the Master. The work is indeed a heavy one: nearly twenty couple of puppies have to be entered every year, and the Master spends a good deal of his short close time of three months in looking at puppies. At one time the most ridiculous looking brutes used to be submitted for inspection, simply on account of their size, but the requirements of the hunt are now so well understood by Masters and huntsmen alike that the process is much simplified. To many Masters and their servants thanks are due for the friendly interest they display in the matter, and the care and trouble they take when they have a puppy likely to suit the Devon and Somerset.

The first thing that strikes one on looking at the pack is the obvious preponderance of the Belvoir type of hound; this is due to two causes. For several years Mr. Sanders has secured the whole of the Belvoir draft, subsequently disposing of such as were not up to the standard; secondly, the remainder of the pack is to a great extent drawn from kennels like the Warwickshire, the York and Ainsty, Mr. Fernie's, and the Quorn which have

freely used Belvoir sires. A look over the old books goes to show in what a great proportion of instances the introduction of a cross of Belvoir blood has produced puppies of the size and quality required. Twenty years ago one noticed the same effect produced by crossing the sires of the late Lord Portsmouth's breeding.

As with all hounds, big bone, true shaped joints, and good feet are indispensable, the latter being from the nature of the ground more essential than with other packs. The stony tracts on Croydon and Dunkery and the constant clambering about on the rocks in the streams and the sea shore making havoc with their toes.

The work is very severe on hounds, and although the huntsmen of old exaggerated the ill-effects of cold water in the winter, it cannot be denied that a certain number of hounds do get laid up with kidney trouble and various forms of rheumatism.

Sidney Tucker, the present huntsman, is an extremely clever kennel man, and by unremitting attention, especially to prevent hounds lying on the flags in the sun, no easy matter when the pack is hunting four days a week in hot weather, has made kennel lameness almost unknown.

Hounds do not, as a rule, stand many seasons' work with the Devon and Somerset; they have many perils to encounter, not the least of which is being trodden on or kicked by the horses of the field. This is occasionally almost unavoidable, for

these hounds are very keen, and when a stag is running the water will dash with the utmost recklessness through a mass of horses crowded in a narrow path; but the majority of cases might be saved by the exercise of a little care on the part of riders. Injuries sustained from stags at bay incapacitate and occasionally even kill hounds almost every year, heart weakness accounts for some—poor old Telegram, who led the pack for several seasons, dropped dead in his tracks when coursing a beaten hind in view across the open—but injuries to the feet resulting in “toes down,” is probably the most frequent cause of drafting. A kill up and down the water close to a village is generally productive of much trouble, since the villagers always throw all their broken crockery into the stream, and if the water is low hounds’ feet get cut to pieces. In exceptionally dry seasons sore feet give a certain amount of temporary trouble, but the pack is never allowed to get really out of condition, and Tucker puts in such an amount of work, not only on the moor but on the roads in the summer, that the trouble from this cause is reduced to a minimum. Many hours are spent in exercise on the moor for the education of the young entry, particularly in the matter of sheep. During the greater part of the stag hunting season the moor is covered with sheep which scatter themselves about among the bracken and all sorts of unlikely places. Jumping up right under hounds’ noses and scouring away with almost the speed of a

deer, they must form a strong temptation, infinitely stronger than that to which foxhounds are subjected by the heavier, slower moving sheep in enclosed countries. Especially is this the case when, as is frequently inevitable, there is no one near enough to stop them. A few sheep seem always to live in the big coverts like Horner Wood and the Barle Valley, and these are a severe test of the discipline of young hounds who find themselves off the line and freed from all control. So carefully, however, are hounds broken that it is the rarest thing for one to transgress, and if he does he never comes out again. In a country so dependent on mutton and wool, and so full of sheep, the slightest suspicion of unsteadiness would cause more ill-will than anything else one can imagine; as it is, the farmers have every confidence in the hounds and are always pleased to see them. This happy result is only arrived at by infinite trouble in the early stages of education, for which the huntsman and his assistants deserve the utmost credit.

CHAPTER XVI.

TROUBLOUS TIMES.

The heavy hart, the blowing buck,
The rascal and the pricket,
Are now among the yeoman's pease,
And leave the fearful thicket.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

JAMES I., who was a devoted sportsman, attempted to revive the old forest jurisdiction all over England, though apparently with but small success. He must, however, have held some forest courts on Exmoor, though the records of them are lost, because an Act was passed in 1641 summarily disafforesting all those forests in which courts had not been held within the last sixty years. Under this Act a very great number of forest rights disappeared for ever in various parts of the country, but Exmoor Forest survived.

James I., following the example of Henry VIII., settled Exmoor on his Queen, Anne of Denmark, after whose death in 1619 it reverted to the King. She seems to have leased her rights to the Earl of Pembroke, who appears to have sublet to various deputies, locally termed "foresters."

Thus we find from various legal proceedings that, in addition to Roger Sydenham, mentioned above, Mr. Stawley, Mr. Thomas Sydenham, "one John Glasse," and Mr. Webber, of Luxborough, were foresters. In 1599 Mr. William Pyncombe, of North Molton, came into possession, and he held till 1613, when he was succeeded by John Pearce of the same place.

From some very interesting legal proceedings which took place in 1621 concerning the wrongful impounding of some sheep, it is clear that pasturage, and not hunting, was the thing chiefly held in consideration. But from the evidence it is clearly established that stag hunting did take place at that time. It is also clear that the so-called foresters, or farmers of the forest as they are also called, were not the Masters. Whether the Earl of Pembroke, who was Forester in Chief till the time of Charles I., either kept hounds himself, or, as is more probable, authorised Hugh Pollard to do so, is nowhere stated.

John Pearce, the acting forester, fell foul of one John Slowley, of Eastcott Farm, Porlock, concerning the agistment of sheep, and brought a suit in Chancery against him, which was not proceeded with, though the feud continued. Eastcott Farm is the farmhouse just below Whitestone, between Birchanger and Westcott. Pearce complained that Slowley kept more sheep than his farm would carry, and fed them on the forest, where he had no right. Slowley complained that Pearce, as soon as he

became farmer of the forest, began to act very oppressively "by agisting and taking into the said forest great multitudes of many thousands of sheepe, cattle, horsebeasts, and piggs, which, besydes their feeding in the said forrest, range into, eat up, devour and spoyle the wasts as well of the Manor of Porlock as of other wasts and commons." Slowley also complained that Pearce demanded and obtained from the tenants new and unaccustomed payments.

This ill-will seems to have come to a head four years afterwards, when John Pearce is alleged to have conspired with John Pearce, of Withypool, yeoman; Robert Wylliams, of Exford, brother-in-law or near kinsman of the said forester; William Kitner, of Exford aforesaid, labourer; William Waterhouse, of Withypool aforesaid, husbandman (he was also the keeper of the forester's pound at Withypool); Henry Sawnders and John Kingdon, who met at the house of Williams, and sallied forth to seek revenge on John Slowley. How they did so is best told in the words of Andrew Stone, husbandman, of Kytner, *i.e.*, Culbone. He says: "About fortnight before Michaelmas last past he, this deponent, goinge into the forest of Exmore to seek some cattle of John Olliver's, this deponent's master, and passinge over the common of Porlock towards the saide forest, he mett John Kingdon and William Kitner, two of the defendants, uppon the saide common of Porlock, and this deponent departinge from them he saw the saide Kingdon

and Kitner rydinge further in uppon the saide common towards a company of the complainant's sheepe, to the number of fyftie or thereabouts as he thinketh, quietlie depasturing uppon the saide common aboue halfe a myle from the neerest bounds of the saide Forest which sheepe weare used nightlie to be folded by the complainant in his ingrownds parcell of his coppihold tenement in Porlock and when they came neere the saide sheepe they made a staye and the saide sheepe ran together towards the bounds of the saide Forest and this deponent further sayth that he goinge further towards the saide forest to seeke the saide cattle saw John Pearce one other of the defendants and William Waterhouse, nowe deceased, lying in Blackborowe, being a noted bounde betweene the saide common of Porlock and the said Forest of Exmore, and there horses grassing by them theare."

After this, in a high-handed manner, they drove Slowley's sheep from Porlock Common, where they had a right to be, on to the forest, where they had no business. Pearce's men then drove them off to Withypool and put them in the forester's pound there, and Pearce declined to let them go again: hence the action. Evidence was given that the same Kingdon, who was a servant of Pearce, was, on another occasion, found driving rother beasts—that is, horned cattle—from Porlock Common towards the forest, and of his violent and abusive language when stopped. We also learn that Robert

Williams had been servant to three foresters—deputies presumably—in succession: Mr. Pearce, Mr. Pincombe, and Mr. Webber. The latter was a Luxborough yeoman, as we learn elsewhere from proceedings in the Star Chamber. Robert Phelps, yeoman, of Porlock, and Walter Dollen, of Stoke Pero, gave evidence on behalf of John Slowley in support of the plea that the forest rights on Exmoor had become obsolete.

Phelps said: "He verelie believeth that there are verie few redd deere within the Forest or Chase of Exmore, and that few or none are bred theare and he sayth theare are not any woods or copses within the bounds of the said Forest nor any other shelter nor harbor for deere within the saide Forest other than heath or fearne or such like. But he further sayth that he hath seene some fewe redd deere lyinge and standinge within the bounds of the said Forest and some others hunted or chased into the said Forest but not often."

Dollen corroborated, and said: "That there are no woods nor copses other than one oake called Kite Oake and a few thornes growinge here and there within the saide Forest nor any other shelter for deere other than sedgbusshes, rushbusshyes, fearnes, heath, or such like."

Manwood, in his "Forest Laws," lays down that it is essential to the existence of a forest that there shall be deer and covert for them. The suggestion that Pearce had no rights because there was no legal

forest, which this evidence was produced to support, savours rather of the ingenuity of pleading to be found in and around Lincoln's Inn. Pearce in his affidavit sets out his tenancy from the Crown, and no mention is made of the deer. The affidavits on both sides are very voluminous, and they throw an interesting light on the relations between the foresters or their deputies, on the one side, and the farmers on the other. The foresters seem to have agisted more beasts than the moor would properly carry, and to have, with the aid of the free suitors of Withypool, extorted all the payments they could get. A much fuller account of this interesting case is contained in Mr. Chadwyck Healey's "*History of Part of West Somerset*." What was the final result of the litigation is not recorded.

Charles I. granted a fresh lease to the Earl of Pembroke for $22\frac{1}{2}$ years of the "Forest and Chace of Exmore" and of the "Manor of Exmore" for 14 years. What is meant by the "Manor of Exmore" is difficult to understand; the whole of Exmoor was royal demesne, and the term "manor" does not seem applicable to it. Probably it was a mistake of the draughtsman, anxious to include everything, but, if so, why a different term of years was appointed needs explanation. It was by this lease that leave was given to build a lodge at Simonsbath, and enclose 100 acres of land.

Charles I., anxious always to raise money, turned his attention, as his father had done before him, to

the question of reclaiming waste lands, and there is a document at the Record Office dated 1630, which sets out his intentions. After reciting that there are immense moors in Devon, Somerset, and Cornwall, the property of the Crown, it goes on :

“ His Ma^{ties} intendments are to drawe all such unnecessary Forests and Waste Lands to improvement, whereof many are lately accomplished. And it is without question, that out of theis three Counties, there may in short space be raised in p^rsent money, to his Ma^{ties} use, at least £100,000 in Fines, and a great yearly Rent, reserved to the Crown. . .

“ If some great person were authorised by his Ma^{tie} to undergo the weight of it, the business would proceed happily ; but without such assitant, those works are not to be dealt in.”

It was rather a sanguine view of the value, but a “ great person,” name suppressed, but from the description an “ ambassador,” came forward with an offer for the forest of Exmoor, if the King would grant a commission to disafforest, to get the work put through and pay a rent of 4*d.* an acre for 60 years for such part as should be allotted to the King.

This would have worked out at a rental of about £200 a year, and the commissioners in 1651 valued the whole forest at £473 18*s.*, so it seems a very fair offer. Charles accepted the offer, and ordered Mr Attorney or Mr. Solicitor to draw up the necessary Commission, and lease.

Luckily for us in these days nothing further seems to have been done in the matter, but the threatened disafforestation may have been the reason for the Earl of Pembroke abandoning his lease, which he seems to have done before 1634, for in that year, 9 Car. I., Exmoor was granted to Sir John Poyntz for the lives of himself, his wife Elizabeth, and his daughter, who became Lady Thurles. Presumably, this was the son of the Sir John Poyntz who previously was forester; he only held the grant for a year, apparently dying at once, for in 10 Car. Lady Thurles assigned her interest to Sir Lewes Pollard, who subsequently assigned it to trustees for his creditors, in whose hands it was found to be in 1657, when the Commonwealth took stock of the lands of the King. Lady Thurles was then said to be 72 years of age, and the Commissioners gave her six weeks' notice to prove she was alive; as she failed to do so they reported the property to be in "hand."

Previous to this, however, Mr. Endymion Porter, a gentleman of the bedchamber, had in 1637 offered the King, with whom he was a great favourite, to give him double the rent of £46 13s. 4d. if he was given a grant in fee with liberty to disafforest. A poor offer compared with the previous one.

That the sporting rights on Exmoor were not a dead letter even in those troubled times is shown by a warrant in the year 1637, addressed to the Ranger of Exmoor, directing him to deliver a fat stag to Mr. Windam. How the stag was to be

killed is not specified. Sir John Wyndham, of Orchard Wyndham, may have had some hounds, and his son may have desired to have a day's hunting on the forest of Exmoor.

During the Civil War, Somerset, and Devon were the scene of much strife, and hunting was most probably completely in abeyance.

Save for the perambulation and the valuation made in 1651, we have little information relating to Exmoor until the Restoration, though we know that the hand of the Lord Protector was heavy on the district round.

We gather, however, from a petition presented to Charles II. by his "Ma^{ties} subjects inhabiting near Exmore in the Counties of Devon and Somerset," that the Commonwealth authorities, with that utter disregard of existing rights which is so characteristic of a certain class of politician when he comes to deal with other people's property, had professed to make a sale of the forest to one James Bovey, of Braunton, and to extinguish all rights over it. The petition

Sheweth—

That whereas your petitioners, and their predecess^{rs} inhabitants as aforesaid, having for this many hundred yeares past, injoyed many privileges, and immunities in the said Forrest of Exmore, as the pasturing of sheepe, horses, and other Cattle, at certaine customary yearely rates, which for some time past they have been deprived off, by one M^r James Bovey, pretending that he had purchased the same as a Chace of the late usurpers: and hath much vexed and troubled your poore petitioners, by impounding

their Cattle, arresting some of their persons, and maintaining many long, and tedious sutes in Lawe against them, onely for their claiming their just rights, and privileges, to their great losse and damage.

The petition goes on to pray for a restitution of the old rights as previously enjoyed. This throws a clear light on the wonderful change which had taken place in the mangement of the forest, and in the way in which forest rights were regarded by the very men whose predecessors, in many cases their direct ancestors, had extorted from the Plantagenet Kings the charters of disafforestation.

Hunting must, indeed, have been at a low ebb. Dunster, Nettlecombe, Holnicote, and other places where hounds might have been kept in Somerset, besides the whole Devon border, were for years in the hands of Cromwell's troops, who, we may safely conjecture, were no respecters of game laws.

So severely did the herds of deer suffer throughout the country, that one of the earliest acts of Charles II. was to decree that no one should kill a wild deer on any of the royal forests for five years. This wise enactment probably prevented the deer from becoming extinct.

Exmoor was granted on a lease from Lady-day, 1661, to James Butler, Marquis of Ormonde, for thirty-one years, being part of the rewards given him for his loyal adherence to the Crown, a loyalty which had cost him close on a million sterling. This nobleman lived mostly in Ireland, and no record seems to exist as to who acted as his deputy or

ranger; nor is there any information as to stag-hunting.

It is impossible to leave this period without saying a few words as to the much-debated question whether or no the Doones ever existed on Exmoor, for if they ever did exist, this period, when the Marquis of Ormonde was lessee of the forest, was the time.

So charming, and so full of "corroborative detail" is Mr. Blackmore's most fascinating romance, that the suggestion that it is pure fiction comes as a great shock to most readers, yet that is the conclusion one is absolutely driven to, much as one would wish to think otherwise.

That there were sheep-stealers and pony-stealers on Exmoor at all times is probably true, and it is quite likely that, when; as is well-known, England was full of wandering disbanded soldiers after the Restoration, they may have been more than usually troublesome on Exmoor, and it is probable that more than one of them may have borne the name of Doone. There was, undoubtedly, some tradition to that effect, and Mr. Blackmore, who was the son of the rector at Oare, was no doubt familiar with it, as was also Mr. Thornton, for many years curate at Countisbury. According to the latter, the last Doone and his granddaughter perished in 1800 in a snow-drift on the Simonsbath-Challacombe track—there was no road in those days—when wandering round singing carols. England is full of similar traditions, wherever there were forests to which outlaws could

resort; the Doone tradition is only a variation of the better known tales about Robin Hood and the Gubbinses on Dartmoor, and the even less known but still existing traditions as to bands of robbers infesting Stoke Courcy Castle and Stowey Castle after the Wars of the Roses. The curious letter which appeared some time ago in the newspapers over the signature of "Audrey Doone" may be left out altogether from any serious consideration of the question.

Let us look at a few undoubted facts. Ridd and Red are common names all over that part of the country, but that there never were any Ridds landowners of any appreciable part of Oare is abundantly clear, since the title to the Manor of Oare, which, till modern times, comprised practically the whole parish, is deducible from the time of John de Kelly in 1315 down to the present owner, Mr. Nicholas Snow.

The so-called Doone Valley was utterly unknown by that name till after the publication of the book, and it is unknown by that name now to the local people living anywhere except on the routes followed by the too credulous Lynton and Minehead tourist.

That Lynton guides point out the actual ruins of the Doones' stronghold is admitted; but the most cursory glance will show that they, like the valley itself, bear no resemblance whatever to the description. There are no cliffs; there is no tunnel or narrow

gorge, nor from the nature of the ground can anything of the kind have ever existed.

This particular spot was probably seized upon by those anxious, for their own purposes, to identify every spot mentioned in the novel because the ruins were there.

There can be no doubt that they are the ruins of the old Badgworthy farmhouse and cottages mentioned above in Chapter XI., one of which was already in ruins in the fifteenth century.

Sheep-stealers there probably were, and they may have taken up their abode in the ruins, but John Ridd and Lorna must be put down as creations of the novelist, while to the same source must be ascribed the calling out of the militia of two counties to try to exterminate the robbers. We know that the moor was crowded with sheep, rother beasts, and horse beasts—tempting, no doubt, to the dishonest, but they would not have been there had they not been reasonably safe; moreover, as reported by the Commissioners in 1651, the fifty-two free suitors of Withypool drove the moor for the forester nine times a year. If the fifty-two free suitors of those days were anything like their descendants of to-day, the writer's good friends and neighbours at Withypool, they would not have been long in routing out any band of a strength at all likely to have inhabited the Doone Valley.

Whether the lease to the Marquis of Ormonde was extended, or for how long, is not quite clear, but in

1700 the forestership was vested in Mr. Walter, of Stevenstone; he was thus the first resident in the neighbourhood for close on a century to hold that office. That he kept the staghounds at Stevenstone is accepted tradition, but there seems some doubt whether he did not share the responsibilities of office with Lord Orford during at least some part of the time. About this period the Dukes of Bedford were keeping hounds, and hunting the South Devon country, frequently running their deer to sea in Tor Bay. From a passage in Lord Graves's letter to the then Viscount Ebrington in 1812 it has been inferred that these were the North Devon Staghounds, but this can hardly have been the case. We know that the North Devon and Exmoor districts were full of deer at this time, but even allowing for frequent "lying out" they can hardly have been hunted from Tavistock.

Hounds had been, undoubtedly, kept by the Abbot of Tavistock, whose hunting box, and, presumably, kennels, were at Morwell. Probably the hounds passed with the property to the Russell family, as was the case in other instances. The black and tan Welsh hounds, till recently hunted by Major Lewis in Glamorganshire, are believed to be descended from the pack taken over by the Lewis of that day, when he received a grant of the monastery property at Van.

There is a stag's head in existence at Foy in Cornwall which tradition asserts was hunted from

Exmoor to sea at Foy during the reign of Henry VIII., the run lasting three days. There is no record of what hounds ran in this wonderful run, but the huntsman's name is given as Tom Bestwetherick. It is far more probable that the stag was one of those hunted by the Tavistock hounds.

That there was more than one pack of hounds hunting concurrently in the West Country is shown by the well authenticated tradition that one of the Arscotts of Tettcott kept staghounds there as well as foxhounds. The well-known old song, "The hunting of Arscott of Tettcott," ending as it does by a leap from a cliff to the Atlantic, looks more like staghunting than foxhunting, though a fox is mentioned, but there are many versions of it, and the date is quite uncertain.

Probably there were no well defined boundaries of any of the staghunting countries, and each master hunted where he had leave to go. Devon, where enclosed at all, was, from the nature of the farming carried on there, more strongly enclosed than most counties, but there were large tracts of wild hill country with open common land quite unenclosed over which the deer could roam at will.

On the other side of Exmoor were the Quantock Hills, where it is probable that a few deer still remained, descendants of those once inhabiting the Royal forest of Petherton. There is, indeed, little doubt that there were always a few deer on Quantock right up to the time when Mr. Bisset took steps to increase

the herd, and they were hunted with a little pack of beagles kept by Mr. Woodrow, the late Lord Taunton's agent, on the same spot where Mr. Stanley's hounds were kennelled.

We are on surer ground when we come to 1740, when the forest of Exmoor passed into the hands of Mr Dyke, of Pixton Park, Dulverton.

The hounds were then kennelled at Jury, on the slope of the hill above Hele Bridge. Unfortunately, we have absolutely no records of the sport shown by Mr Edward Dyke, but on his death in 1746 the forest, and with it Pixton and the hounds, passed to Sir Thomas Acland, of Killerton, who had married Mr Dyke's niece and heiress Elizabeth, who brought to him wide lands in the parishes of Selworthy, Luccombe, Minehead, Porlock, Dulverton, Brompton Regis, Exford, Dunster, Carhampton, Timberscombe, St. Decuman's, Old Cleeve, Crowcombe, Bicknoller, Cutcombe, Bossington, Stoke Pero, Brushford, Winsford, Hawkridge, Withycombe, East Anstey, Oakford, and Bampton, besides the large estates of Tetton and Pyrland not in the staghunting country.

Sir Thomas Acland maintained the hunt in great splendour, keeping the hounds sometimes at Jury, sometimes at Highercombe, and sometimes at Holnicote.

It is curious to notice that Sir Thomas Acland had a strong hereditary right to be forester of Exmoor and master of the staghounds, since his mother, wife of the sixth baronet, was Cecily,

daughter and co-heiress of Sir Thomas Wroth, who was descended from the old family of de Wrotham, in whom, as we have seen, the forestership in fee of Exmoor was vested before it passed to the Mortimers, Earls of March. The claim of the Wroths to this hereditary right had never been completely abandoned, and although they do not seem to have taken any very active steps to assert it, the existence of the claim is said to have been sufficient to prevent the sale of the forest on one occasion.

On the death of Sir Thomas Dyke Acland, seventh baronet, in 1770 he was succeeded by his son, who was for many years known as "Sir Thomas his honour"; during his mastership the hunt was carried on with unexampled success till 1776.

In this year the hounds, though apparently not the forestership of Exmoor, were handed over to Colonel Basset, of Watermouth, who also showed great sport over a wild stretch of country till 1784, but here again we have no record of the runs or the number of deer killed, until the year 1780, from which date the diary of the Rev. J. Boyse, of Withypool, now in the possession of Mr. Robert Collyns, of Dulverton, gives many accounts of runs, the most notable of which are published in the appendix to Dr. Collyns's "*Chase of the Wild Red Deer.*"

At this time the great strongholds of the deer seem to have been in the Arlington and Marwood districts, if one may judge from the runs thought worth recording.

In 1784 the hounds again came into the hands of Sir Thomas Acland, and were kennelled for the most part at Highercombe.

It was the custom during this time for open house to be kept apparently both before and after hunting with almost boundless hospitality. There is in the possession of the present Sir Thomas Acland a magnificent punch-bowl with hunting scenes depicted on it, which was brought home from China by Mr. Acland, of Littlebray, who is said to have taken out the design and the clay on purpose to have the bowl fashioned by oriental artists. There is also a set of wineglasses with the stag's head surrounded by the motto, "Prosperity to staghunting," which was the old toast for the honouring of which they were so frequently filled. The same badge and motto is still in use on the hunt buttons, and most of the principal families in the district have preserved the old, flat, silver engraved buttons worn at that date. The buttons which Mr. Basset wore when Master from 1886 to 1892, were the same set which Colonel Basset wore when Master a century before.

There was also at this time at Holnicote a splendid collection of antlers, with the dates and where found and killed inscribed on the frontal bone, as is done at the present day, but they unfortunately were lost in the fire which destroyed Holnicote, leaving only those which hung in the stables, and many of these were mutilated many years ago by a stupid groom, who sawed off some of the points because they

interfered with the putting of hay into the racks.

Sir Thomas hunted the country till 1794, and during that time killed seventy-three stags and seventy-seven hinds.

Colonel Basset succeeded and hunted the hounds till within a few months of his death in 1801, when the pack was dispersed, six and a half couple going to Lord Fortescue to found a new pack.

Lord Fortescue hunted the country in 1802, and then they passed to Mr. Worth, of Worth House, Tiverton, and were maintained by subscription till 1810. Mr. Worth killed forty-two stags and fifty-nine hinds, and showed good sport, many excellent runs being recorded.

In 1811 Lord Graves, of Bishop's Court, near Exeter, assumed command, and killed in that year ten stags and thirty hinds, but in the following year the pack came once more to Castle Hill, where for six years Lord Fortescue hunted them, showing wonderful sport, including the great Satterleigh Marsh run, the greatest on record, and killing 108 deer.

In 1814, during the Mastership of Lord Fortescue, the lease of the Forest of Exmoor to Sir Thomas Dyke Acland expired and was not renewed, Parliament on July 4th of that year having passed an Act authorising the disafforestation and sale of this ancient Royal possession.

There was a perambulation in 1815 by two

Commissioners, who set out the boundaries exactly as in the survey in 1651, though not in the same words. The forest was found to contain 18,810 acres, approximately the same acreage as before, and this was awarded as to twelve twenty-second parts to the King, and as to one-eighth to Sir Thomas Acland in lieu of tithes. This was the portion lying between Simonsbath and the other Acland property at Bray, the remainder being allotted to various proprietors and Lords of Manors in lieu of pasturage and other rights on the forest. The latter awards gave a considerable amount of dissatisfaction—particularly at Hawkridge and Withypool—among small owners, who declared, and whose sons declare, that they were robbed of their "privileges" and got nothing in return. There appears to have been a certain amount of foundation for this.

Up till this time the free suitors of Withypool (there was great difficulty in raising fifty-two of them) had always been in the habit of carrying out their ancient task of driving the forest for cattle, to which had been added that of beating the bounds every seven years.

They are said by old men now living, whose fathers had taken part in the ceremony, to have ridden in single file along inside the boundary, and were accompanied outside that line by the representatives of the adjoining manor. They rode the exact line whatever the ground was like, wet or dry, and many were their adventures when bad ground

like that by Litton Water and below the Chains had to be crossed, particularly as the day wore on, for at the boundary of each manor the party was met by the representative of the Lord of the Manor with drinks, while the forester provided "meat" and presumably drinks also at Sadler's Stone. Asked if they got all round and back the same night, my aged informant, the son of a free suitor, shook his head and said, "Not all of 'em."

In 1818 the King's allotment of something over twelve thousand acres was sold for £50,000 to Mr. John Knight, of Worcestershire. In this year Lord Fortescue gave up the hounds, which passed, as a subscription pack once more, to Mr. Stucley Lucas, of Baronsdown. But evil days had fallen upon staghunting, and in 1825 it was found necessary to sell the pack at Tattersall's, when they found a home in Germany.

Mr. John Knight, after acquiring the portion of Exmoor allotted to the King, bought Sir Thomas Acland's allotment, and from Sir Arthur Chichester the manor of Brendon, thus acquiring a very extensive range of country. The sale of the forest was quite unrestricted, and tied the purchaser to nothing save the making of certain boundary enclosures, some roads, and some public watering places for cattle. Some of the roads were made, some were not, but they none the less found their way into the old ordnance map, while other roads that were made were omitted therefrom, to the no small confusion of

those who subsequently tried to find their way by aid of the map.

Mr. Knight had been successful in enclosing portions of his own county, Worcester, and he set to work with great vigour to turn his newly acquired property to account.

A small village had, since the small enclosure authorised by Charles I., grown up at Simonsbath, and Mr. Knight taking up his quarters at what was till then the village inn, started to build himself a large house, the unfinished ivy-clad walls of which remained standing like a picturesque ruin till pulled down a few years ago by Lord Fortescue.

Immense sums of money were spent on road-making, enclosing, draining, and in prospecting for minerals. The South Forest, that is, the part south of the Barle, was entirely enclosed and substantial farms built, such as Emmet's Grange, Winterhead, Sherdon, while Honeymead, The Warren, Larkbarrow, and Driver, or Dryford, were laid out. To carry out these works all the local labour in the villages round was insufficient, and a whole army of Irishmen was imported, a very turbulent crowd, always fighting among themselves. Tales of their battles still survive.

The Ebbw Vale and other companies, who were sinking shafts and raising iron ore, imported gangs of Welshmen, and the peaceful haunts of the red deer were rudely disturbed. A very high quality of iron ore was found in abundance, and a track for a tramway to take the ore from Simonsbath, by the

Warren, across Acmead, and so to sea at Porlock Weir, was surveyed, and parts of it were commenced and are known as "The Tramway" to this day—a name sorely puzzling to the stranger.

Among the most enduring works executed by Mr. Knight are Pinkworthy Pond, which was intended to ensure a water supply for the mines below, and was made by damming up the head waters of the Barle where they issue from "The Chains." "The Chains Path," or trench, which runs along the southern side of the Chains, and separates that stretch of bog from the rough enclosures of Driver, was also one of his improvements. It was no doubt originally intended as a drain, and fulfils that purpose to-day, but being cut down right on to the hard bottom it enables staghunters to get along, though in the autumn frequently, and in the winter always, they are up almost to their stirrups in inky-black water. To Mr. Knight also we are indebted for those deep, square cut drainage ditches which intersect so much of the wet ground like the bars of a gridiron, and account for more falls in the course of a season than anything else. These were made by plough teams of black oxen working twelve to a team; indeed, almost all the hauling for Mr. Knight's improvements was done in this way. The oxen are reputed to have been very savage. During this time the inn at Moles Chamber, the ruins of which look so forlorn and desolate, did a roaring trade. This inn had not borne the best of reputations for many years. Situated just on the

border of Somerset and Devon, it needed the constables of two counties to make sure of the arrest of anyone who was "wanted," so that it was much frequented by those who desired a secure retreat. It stood, moreover, on the main road—pack-horse track be it understood, there were no metalled roads till after this date—between Barnstaple and Dunster, being a regular halting place for the trains of pack-horses, and it was much used by the free-traders for distributing the smuggled goods which were landed on the rocky coasts between Porlock and Lynmouth, notably at the "Bark House" and below Culbone, where the old path by which the kegs were carried up through the wood can still be traced.

The difficulty and cost of transport of the ore, after a short time, caused a cessation of the mining operations, but Mr. Knight persevered with his agricultural improvements for many years, and on the south side of the country with some small measure of success, but unfortunately utterly out of proportion to the capital expended. At length, however, he became convinced that further expenditure would be useless; the Welshmen and the Irishmen were withdrawn, and, save for the farmers and the few labourers employed on the new farms, the district became as quiet and as uninhabited as before. But in the meantime the red deer had been driven to forsake a large stretch of country; deer are very conservative in their habits, and they will continue to avoid a particular district for many years

after the cause which originally led to its abandonment has been removed, and it is only within the last few years that deer have taken once more to using the South Forest.

It must not be inferred that Mr. John Knight was inimical to stag hunting, quite the contrary, and he was one of the subscribers to the hunt when the old pack was sold. As deer preservers he and his son, the late Sir Frederick Knight, were particularly zealous and loyal to the hunt.

For two years after the sale of the hounds there was no stag hunting, and poaching prevailed to such an extent that in a very short time the herd would have been exterminated had it not been for the enterprise of Sir Arthur Chichester, of Youlstone, who in 1827 got together a pack of draft foxhounds, and hunted the country till 1833. Then ensued another interregnum, and poaching again was rife till 1837, when, by the exertions of Dr. C. Palk Collyns, a subscription pack was got together which hunted nominally under a committee, but really under Dr. Collyns, till 1841, when the Hon. Newton Fellowes took the Mastership till 1847; on his resignation he was succeeded by Sir Arthur Chichester for one year. Mr. Theobalds then brought his pack of hounds for two months from Cheltenham in 1849, but though accustomed to carted deer they had little success. In 1850 Mr. Luxton, of Winleigh, provided a pack and fair sport for a season, but gave way to Captain West, whose

hounds had been entered to carted deer in the neighbourhood of Bath. He and his eccentric but able huntsman, "Sam," showed excellent sport. In 1852 Mr. Carew of Collipriest, then master of the Tiverton Foxhounds, assumed the command, only to relinquish it once more to Captain West in 1853.

These constant changes of Masters, hounds, and huntsmen were naturally very detrimental to the sport of staghunting; poaching was on the increase, openly and without disguise, and the deer were fast becoming extinct. But the tide of fortune had reached its lowest ebb. A fresh attempt to raise subscriptions met with a somewhat encouraging response—on paper—and Mr. Fenwick, the tenant of Pixton Park, who, having come to the country for shooting, had seen good sport with Captain West, undertook the Mastership. Mr. Fenwick, who subsequently on his marriage with the heiress of Bagborough took the name of Bisset, was one of those rare men to whom difficulties and obstacles, which would daunt other men, serve only as incentives to more vigorous efforts towards that success which they inevitably attain in the long run. It is hard for us in these days of prosperity to realise the difficulties which confronted Mr. Bisset, and were successfully overcome by him. Scarcity of deer, apathy, and in some cases almost hostility, of landowners, and deficiency of money were only three—though an important three—of the difficulties. The last-mentioned difficulty

he overcame to a great extent by finding the money himself, but it was many years before it could be said that he had the cordial assistance of the owners of land, though his innate kindliness, disguised under a somewhat cold and distant manner, had soon won over the farmers to his side.

In his first season, though hounds were out twenty-five days, only two stags and two hinds were killed; in his next year only one stag was killed, four hinds, and two male deer. Even after ten years of mastership, with such able assistants as Jack Babbage and Arthur Heal, only three stags, four hinds, and three other deer were killed. In 1861 Mr. Bisset's tenure of Pixton Park came to an end, and but for the public-spirited conduct of Mr. Froude Bellew, who turned out of his house at Rhyll himself, and also gave up his kennels, Mr. Bisset's Mastership would inevitably have come prematurely to an end. In that year the pack, which had been kept at Jury Kennels, were moved to Rhyll, where they remained until they came to Exford in 1876.

In 1865 Mr. Bisset, who had taken much pains to establish a herd of deer on the Quantock Hills, killed his first stag there. Little by little the number of deer in the country increased; public opinion, which had been, if anything, against the hounds, had veered round, and now was strongly in their favour; but the financial question was still a serious one.

The district is a sparsely populated and a poor one; the resident landowners were, and are now, few

and far between, and, with one or two exceptions, not much blessed with this world's goods. The class of residents not owning land, professional men and those engaged in business, which contributes so large a part of the income of most packs of hounds, was absolutely non-existent round Exmoor. In a word, the country could not afford the funds necessary to support the hounds on the footing essential to the maintenance of sport on a sound basis.

But at this crisis a friend was arriving whose advent contributed largely to the solving of the difficulty, that friend being the railway.

The excellent sport shown by Mr. Bisset's hounds had been told far and wide among hunting men, and a few good sportsmen like Major Whyte Melville, Mr. Granville Somerset, and others had come down to enjoy the sport, but the country was singularly inaccessible, and it was not till the railway made access more easy that visitors came down in any numbers. The effect was twofold: they subscribed, or some of them did, to the hunt fund, and they brought money into the country and spent it there, with the result that many who had been indifferent to, and even averse from, staghunting began to realise that the hounds might become a source of prosperity to the district, and many a purse, hitherto fast closed, yielded to the entreaties of the hunt secretary.

During these long years of trouble Mr. Bisset had been fortunate in having the help in the field of three



Oare Deer Park. "I see them opposite, coming down to water."

of the best servants the hunt has ever had. Jem Blackmore, who lived at Haddon and in whom the knowledge of his art was practically hereditary, was harbourer till his death in 1861; Jack Babbage, an Anstey man, who had hunted hare and also stag for one season, 1848, under Sir Arthur Chichester, was huntsman till 1868, when he retired through old age; and Arthur Heal, a native of Washfield, near Tiverton, who had begun life as a "buttons" in the service of Mr. Baillie Collyns, and had subsequently been entered to harehunting, was whipper-in; an able trio of whom the latter proved himself, after he succeeded Babbage in 1868, to be the ablest. He is—for though close on ninety he is still strong enough to ride to the nearest meets—one of those men in whom the hunting instinct is born, and he would probably have shown himself as great an adept at killing rats or big game as he was at killing deer. He was admittedly a very fine shot, and had a skilful hand on a fly-rod.

The hunt sustained a severe loss in 1868 by the death of Mr. Nicholas Snow, of Oare, in his eightieth year. To his zealous care of the deer, and in particular to his action in enclosing the best bit of heather on the moor (now known as the Deer Park) with a fence which let deer readily in and out, but excluded sheep and ponies, and in planting the little combes adjoining with larch, is largely to be attributed the preservation of the deer on that side from destruction in the troublous times, and the increase

of the herd afterwards. Followers of the hounds owe a deep debt of gratitude to his memory.

Mr. Bisset had, like all other Masters of hounds, to endure a large amount of obloquy, particularly owing to his strict adherence to all the old laws of staghunting, written and unwritten laws which had been almost completely disregarded for many years, but by 1870 he had conclusively proved how right he had been throughout, and no less than four hundred and thirty grateful supporters contributed to present him with his portrait.

As the herd increased and as the popularity of the sport increased—and the history of Mr. Bisset's Mastership is a story of continual upward progress—the number of hunting days had to be increased. Mr. Bisset began by hunting twenty-five days in a season—the whole season, not staghunting only—but by 1871 this had risen to fifty, and continued steadily to be added to, for now we come across the first traces of a difficulty, which subsequently grew and grew until it almost threatened the existence of the hunt—namely, the superabundance of deer.

The crowds of hinds in Horner was then, as now, one of the chief sources of trouble, and to meet it Mr. Bisset determined to hunt many consecutive days together in Horner, and to hunt with relays of hounds.

In 1875 Mr. Bisset generously bought a small property at Exford, and thereon built at his own expense the present kennels and stables. Everything

was prosperous, the deer were spreading far and wide, and in 1878 it was found necessary to hunt three days a week; but a bad set-back was to come, for the pack, which had been worked up to a high state of efficiency, developed rabies, and had to be destroyed, after many efforts to stamp out the disease.

In 1879 a seal was set on the popularity of the hunt and of the Master by the visit in August of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales.

In the winter another case of rabies occurred, and the hounds were kept separated in ordinary dog kennels for three months during the time they should have been killing hinds, thus enabling the herd still further to increase. In 1880 Mr. Bisset found it necessary to hunt on ninety-four days, and he killed seventy-five deer, a number absolutely unprecedented.

No man ever made a deeper study of staghunting than did Mr. Bisset, and during the last years of his Mastership there undoubtedly was no man who knew so much as he did, not even Mr. Froude Bellew or Arthur Heal. His knowledge of the moor and the probable run of a deer was extraordinary, and in his latter years, when failing health forbade his riding as hard as in former days, his knowledge invariably enabled him to be up at the kill long before many of those who had been riding their utmost during the run. This great capacity impressed visitors mightily, and great would have been his following had he

allowed it, but he would not let anyone use him as a pilot.

In this way people came to forget that in his earlier days he had gone as hard as, or harder than, anyone over the moor. His weight, which at one time was said to have been twenty-two stone, necessitated his riding big horses, but none the less he insisted on quality, and did not mind paying the necessary price, even to very large sums, provided he got what he wanted.

He was not an easy man to sell a horse to ; he had them, of course, carefully tried and vetted ; he then tried them himself. Ten minutes' trotting and cantering round the dealer's field would tell him all he wanted to know about the " feel " of the horse, he would then ride up to the delighted dealer who felt sure of his sale and say, pulling out his watch, " Nice horse, Mr. So-and-So. It's just ten ; I'll tell you at four o'clock if I will buy him. I shan't go out of the field ; you need not stop." He would then walk the horse patiently round and round the field for six hours without intermission ; at the end of the time he would pull up, take out his watch, and throw the reins on the horse's neck. If he would after that stand still for five minutes with twenty-two stone on his back without shuffling his feet and easing a leg, Mr. Bisset would pay practically whatever he was asked for him. He always declared that test told him more than any vet. could do. Needless to say, very few horses could pass it, but those that did were

invaluable. Mr. Bisset always had his second horse-man close up to him, and continually changed from one horse to the other; he invariably stood down when there was no absolute necessity for him to be on a horse, but, even up to the last, when he really wanted to go he could drive a horse along as hard and as fast as the lightest weight in the field.

Mr. Bisset was elected in 1880 to represent West Somerset in Parliament, beating Mr., now Sir, Thomas Dyke Acland, and his twenty-six years' Mastership of the staghounds came to an end. But the life in the House of Commons was uncongenial to him, and the confinement and long hours undoubtedly tended to shorten his days. Though able to hunt a few days in 1881 and 1882 he suffered much in health in 1883, and on July 7th, 1884, died at Bagborough, to the great grief of two counties, where his name is still held dear as a sportsman and a kindly gentleman, who by his courage and generosity conferred lasting benefits upon the country of his adoption.

CHAPTER XVII.

MODERN TIMES.

Waken, lords and ladies gay,
To the green-wood haste away ;
We can show you where he lies,
Fleet of foot, and tall of size ;
We can show the marks he made,
When 'gainst the oak his antlers frayed ;
You shall see him brought to bay,
Waken, lords and ladies gay.

SIR WALTER SCOTT (Hunting Song).

ON the resignation of Mr. Bisset, the choice of the hunt committee fell on Viscount Ebrington, to the great satisfaction, not only of Mr. Bisset. but of the whole hunt. A Fortescue thus, after a lapse of over sixty years, once more was Master of the staghounds.

Mr. Bisset's good will and generosity towards the hunt knew no bounds ; he not only presented the pack to the new Master, but he granted him a lease of the kennels and stables at an almost nominal rent, and after his death he left the Oxford property to trustees for a term of years, on trust to let it to the then Master of the staghounds, so long as the hunt should be properly carried on in the manner it had been by himself and Lord Ebrington.

For six seasons Lord Ebrington retained the Mastership and continued to show sport of a very

high order, though he was not exempt from trials and difficulties. The herd was too numerous, and complaints of "deer damage" became more and more frequent and insistent. A small fund, collected at the various inns principally from visitors, had been in existence for some years, from which exceptionally severe cases of damage had been partially compensated, but the fund rarely exceeded a hundred pounds, and it was quite inadequate to meet the new demands.

The Master, the committee, and a few who hunted all the year round had grasped the situation, and realised what the consequences of an undue extension of the herd would entail; but the average man knew next to nothing about it, though he liked to feel that there were "plenty of deer." The consequence was that a most bitter outcry was raised against the Master when, in his first season, he killed a hundred and one deer. But Lord Ebrington held on his way with the full approval of Mr. Bisset and of the hunt committee, and as in subsequent years the strength of the herd was obviously maintained, the outcry quieted down for a time, only, however, to break out afresh in years to come.

In 1883 the experiment was made of hunting four days a week in the staghunting season, but the number of deer killed was not thereby much increased, and the work was found to put an undue strain on the veteran Arthur Heal.

At the end of the season of 1886 Lord Ebrington

found his Parliamentary and other duties made such heavy calls upon his time that he was obliged to ask the committee to accept his resignation, which with great reluctance they did.

Lord Ebrington's reign was marked by many first-class runs, particularly over unusual lines of country. Amongst these the most memorable was that from the plantation by Oare Post, by Yeanworthy Common, Brendon Common, Longstone, Moles Chamber, Hole Water, and right away down to near Brayley Bridge. Few were at the finish, and many did not get home that night.

In 1884 tufters, with only the Master and about three more, ran from Ashleigh Combe on Quantock across the vale to the Parret at Combebach Passage, and the deer was taken close to Burnham. On February 11th, 1885, a hind led hounds a very fast pace from Burrigge Wood, close to Dulverton, by way of Withypool, Simonsbath, and Challacombe to the Bray by Kipscombe Wood. The hind was last seen near Friendship Inn. On November 13th, 1885, hounds ran a hind from Haddon over Lype Common and Dunkery to Chettisford Water and lost, scent having failed. In 1886 a young deer gave the gallop of the season from Haddon to Tarr Steps, and by Humber's Hall and Withypool Common to Sherdon Hutch and Emmet's Grange. The pace was tremendous all the way. Only seven horses reached the finish, and four were left lying dead on the way. A most unusual line, but seventeen years afterwards

Mr. Sanders had a brilliant gallop over almost the same line, killing at the same place.

These are only a very few of the good runs recorded. All those who were fortunate enough to hunt during these years still carry pleasant memories of very many merry gallops, particularly from Yard Down. It was during Lord Ebrington's Mastership that the deer began to resort in any numbers to the Bray Coverts, which had been practically abandoned for many years. There they found quiet lying, and thence we have year after year enjoyed some of those flying gallops which make the field indeed resemble the tail of a comet.

In 1884, owing to the recent death of Mr. Bisset, the opening meet was at Holmbush Gate, Porlock Hill, this being for the first time since 1865 when Mr. Bisset inaugurated the practice of meeting at Cloutsham, the only other deviation from which was in 1898, after the death of the late Sir Thomas Dyke Acland, when the hounds met at Haddon. Year by year, attracted by the sport, increasing crowds of visitors came down, and the numbers of the field were quite unprecedented.

Lord Ebrington was succeeded by Mr. C. H. Basset, of Watermouth Castle and Pilton, near Barnstaple, and once more the hounds came into the hands of one of the old county families the head of which had held office a century before.

Mr. Basset, who like his predecessor held office for six seasons, continued to show sport and to do his

utmost to grapple with the superabundance of deer, but he also had to submit to severe criticisms with regard to the supposed extermination of the herd, which was, in fact, steadily though slowly increasing, as afterwards was apparent to all men. Mr. Basset, who had been a "hound man" as distinguished from a "hunting man" from his earliest youth, paid unceasing attention to the pack, and brought them to a very high standard, both as to work and appearance. He was a consummate judge of a horse, and a good man to get to hounds in spite of the loss of a hand, and the curiously short stirrups in which he rode. He had a wonderful knack of making horses go quietly, and all his own horses and most of those ridden by the men went in plain snaffle bridles. He liked little horses, but they were strong and full of quality. A big London dealer, watching him changing from "Bounding Ben" to "Bideford," exclaimed, "Where on earth does he buy them? If someone would only send that class up to me I could sell them all day long."

Mr. Basset started with "Arthur" still carrying the horn, but the gallant old man was getting up in years, and the long wet days hindhunting told heavily upon him. For years Mrs. Heal had always had a cup of soup ready for him on his return, after swallowing which he did up his hounds for the night and went straight to bed, having his supper brought to him in bed. In 1889 Arthur gave up the horn to his whipper-in, Anthony Huxtable, and

Sidney Tucker was promoted from second horseman, at which difficult task he was a genius, to be whip. It was at this time that Mr. Basset began the practice, ever since continued, of mounting the huntsman on a pony for the tufting, and letting him change to his first horse when the pack is laid on. This was a great success; with a light weight, a good pony can go as fast in the coverts as a bigger horse, and is handier in scrambling about, doing his work as well and with far less risk to himself.

Sport was, as a rule, good during Mr. Basset's time, but was in some years a good deal interfered with by weather, particularly by fog and snow which interfered with the hindhunting, a serious matter when deer were multiplying rapidly.

Many brilliant days were recorded, the most brilliant of which, without a doubt, was the run in 1888 from Tithecombe Wood, by Bratton Fleming, to Luccombe Church, right from one end of the moor to the other, a distance of about twenty-three miles in two hours and five minutes, from the road by Friendship Inn. It was a race from start to finish, and but for a big bend by Nutscale, which enabled some of us to turn by Luccott Farm and Lee Hill and get to hounds again by Horner Green, very few would have seen the finish at all.

Three very fast gallops took place from Yard Down to Horner across the same line which hounds had run several times before and have often run since.

When Mr. Basset retired from office Colonel Hornby, of Clewer Lodge, who had acted as Deputy Master of the Royal Buckhounds, was chosen to succeed him, but only retained the command for two years. His tenure of office was marked by several very fine runs, and so far as stag hunting was concerned must be accounted as having been extraordinarily lucky; but his luck did not hold out in hind hunting, the number of breeding hinds brought to hand was disappointing, and the herd gained a further advantage, one of which it took many years' hard work to deprive it.

The best runs in Colonel Hornby's time were one from Arlington to Horner; from Cloutsham to Chapman's Barrows and back to Nutscale; and a long slow hunt from Brayford by West Buckland, Filleigh, and Chittlehampton to the Taw at Brightleigh Weir above Umberleigh. Another long hunt over an awkward country was from Haddon by Morebath, Bampton Down, Huntsham, and Upplowman to Halberton, near Tiverton Junction. The deer broke his leg, and had he not done so would probably have established a record for distance in that direction, for he had not been hustled and seemed to be going quite comfortably.

The number of big stags in the Quantock coverts was at this time very great, and Colonel Hornby found it necessary to devote much time to them, securing some very remarkable heads.

Mr. R. A. Sanders, who took command in

succession to Colonel Hornby, had been hunting with the staghounds as a visitor for a good many seasons, was thoroughly keen on the sport, and had also the great advantage of having married one of the most popular ladies, and one of the best riders in the hunt, Miss Lucy Halliday, of Glenthorne. Mr. Sanders brought to the difficult task youth, strength, and determination, coupled with a natural aptitude for hunting, and a whole-hearted love for the sport. With these advantages it is little to be wondered at that his reign has been remarkable for the continued high level of sport shown, and that on quitting office he leaves staghunting in a more prosperous condition and more firmly established than it has been for many generations.

Anthony Huxtable still carried the horn, with Sidney Tucker to whip in to him, and with Fred Goss, who had succeeded on the death of Andrew Miles, as harbourer. Mr. Sanders killed his first stag on a bye day in July, 1895, from Ringcombe, below Molland Common, a very favourite summer haunt for fat old deer. He proved a noble trophy, having all his rights and four on top on both sides. Mr. Sanders quickly realised the urgency of reducing the herd, which during the few previous years had increased with alarming rapidity, and he was ably seconded in all he did by Lord Ebrington, the chairman, and the rest of the hunt committee.

The arduous duties of honorary secretary had now devolved on Mr. Phillip Everard, a name associated

with staghunting on Exmoor for upwards of five centuries. Under his able management effective steps were taken to ensure that casual visitors to the moor, who come down to enjoy the pleasure of staghunting, should contribute adequately to its support, and particularly to the Deer Damage Fund.

The depredations of the deer were so extensive, and upon some farms the loss was so heavy, that no farmer, however well disposed to the hunt, could afford the loss. Compensation, as adequate as circumstances would permit of, was the only remedy. The outcry did not come only from the farmers, for some of the most zealous of the deer-preserving landowners impressed upon the committee the absolute necessity of effecting a considerable reduction in the herd.

Mr. Sanders' first season was highly successful, both from the point of view of the deer killed and of the excellent runs obtained, and everyone was delighted. An important step towards the solution of the great problem of dealing with the herd was taken when, with the approbation of the Hunt Committee, Mr. Sanders arranged to lend the country south of the Taunton and Barnstaple railway to Sir John Heathcote Amory, of Knightshayes Court, Tiverton, who undertook to keep up a pack of hounds and hunt the district, including the coverts near Barnstaple. Mr. Ian Amory carried the horn, with Messrs. Albert and Clement de Las Casas to whip in to him, and very excellent sport

they have shown for many seasons over a wild, rough country. This relieved the Exford pack from having to deal with the deer in the big Stoodley woodlands, and in the Eggesford district, both situated so far from the kennels as to necessitate hounds lying out overnight.

The herd on the Quantocks also received particular attention, and Mr. Amory was asked occasionally to assist there also, for the number of deer was so utterly out of proportion to the extent of wild country available for them as to render their immediate reduction imperatively necessary. For several seasons both Mr. Sanders and Mr. Amory devoted all the time they could spare to the Quantocks, but both had their hands full, and more than full, nearer home, and in 1900 Mr. E. A. V. Stanley, of Quantock Lodge, offered to get together a pack expressly to hunt the Quantock Hills. How completely out of hand the herd on that small range of hills had become is best shown by the fact that it took Mr. Stanley five years' hard work, hunting steadily two days a week, to reduce it to its proper numbers.

Mr. Sanders also found it necessary to increase the number of hunting days, and during hindhunting hounds went out four days a week, Mr. Sanders carrying the horn on two days himself.

The deer in the Barnstaple country were causing much anxiety, as they were spreading far and wide. The difficulty of dealing with them was great, because some of the most important coverts, in the centre of

the district, were shut against hounds by a lady who did not approve of staghunting; and secondly, the free run to the open moor by Friendship Inn and Wistland Pound was badly interfered with by the line of the new Lynton Light Railway, so that deer were almost inevitably turned back upon the forbidden ground.

Such was the urgency, however, of the matter that a subscription pack was got up to hunt the district under the Mastership of Captain Paterson and Mr. Arundell Clarke, and, in spite of all the difficulties they had to contend with, they for some years showed excellent sport, and materially assisted to reduce the numbers of the deer on that side of the moor. Thus in a country where, less than fifty years before, twenty-five days' hunting sufficed for the season and the Master then dare not kill all the deer he took, four packs of hounds were at work, and during many months ten meets were taking place in every week. These strenuous efforts undoubtedly checked the increase of the herd, but it was still much too numerous both for sport and for the capacity of the country. To see herds of forty or sixty deer break away from the deer park was nothing unusual in October. With so many deer in the country the difficulty of killing was immensely increased, as the hunted deer was continually joining others, and the ground was stained in all directions. Though many good runs took place, in some seasons it happened, especially over the forest, that hounds had to go

home without blood they richly deserved on many days, solely owing to the impossibility of singling out the hunted stag. On several occasions upwards of a hundred stags, or at least deer with horns, have been counted on the commons between Cloutsham and Culbone Stables when hounds have run across after a hind. The winter is the time to see the stags, and no one who has not been hind-hunting pretty frequently can form the least idea of the numbers of deer in the country.

All sorts of estimates have been made from time to time of the number of deer, but it is extremely difficult to judge. In the old days, as we have seen, the quota of fat stags for the Royal larder demanded from Exmoor was twenty. Now, taking the ordinary calculation on a Scotch forest that one-eighth of the herd is the utmost that ought to be killed, this would point to there having been on the forest and in the purlieus at least three hundred and twenty deer, since male and female calves are born in about equal numbers. We find subsequently that a hundred deer was the number reserved in a lease of the forest, but in the time of Sir Thomas Acland the number was estimated at three hundred, and at two hundred when Lord Fortescue took over the hounds in 1812. Considering the number of deer reported as killed and the waste from poaching and other causes, these numbers were probably not far wrong, though somewhat in excess of the actual fact. When Mr. Bisset took the hounds in 1855 the

number was supposed to have dwindled to about sixty, and this was probably not far from correct. Since then it had steadily increased.

Numerous and unavailing efforts were made from time to time to arrive at something like a census, but there is very little to go upon, and the estimates were largely dependent on the preconceived ideas of the person making them, as to whether too many or too few deer were being killed. One ingenious calculator assured Lord Ebrington that the actual number of deer was one hundred and eighty-three. Judging from the fact that he killed from eighty to a hundred deer most years, and the herd during his Mastership, though increasing, was only doing so slowly, there must have been somewhere about five hundred deer in the country. How rapidly they increased and multiplied can be judged from the fact that it was not until the four packs were accounting for over two hundred and fifty deer a year that any substantial diminution in the herd was apparent. There must, therefore, have been, about 1902, somewhere about fifteen hundred deer in the country. This may seem incredible to some who have only been out staghunting, but, being based on the actual returns of deer brought to hand, is, the writer ventures to think, no exaggeration.

Such was the problem to which Mr. Sanders had to address himself, and he did so with vigour and success in spite of a certain amount of well-meant criticism as to the number of deer being killed. Secure in the unanimous support of the committee,

the landowners, and the farmers, he went steadily on his way, and year by year showed better and better sport to an ever-increasing field. In 1897 Mr. Sanders began hunting the hounds one day a week himself during staghunting as well as hindhunting, and many excellent gallops were enjoyed. It had for some time been apparent that Anthony's health was failing, and in 1901, at the end of staghunting, he surrendered the horn and retired to a farm at Exford, receiving a handsome donation from his many friends. He did not long survive his retirement.

Anthony was succeeded by Sidney Tucker, and Fred Barber, who had graduated as second horseman, became whip, but his health not proving equal to the hardships of hindhunting, he gave way in favour of Ernest Bawden, who comes of a sporting family at Hawkridge, and must have been staghunting as long as he can remember.

Mr. Sanders now determined to hunt four days a week regularly, and separated the hounds into two packs—the big dog pack, $25\frac{1}{2}$ inches in height, which he hunted himself two days a week, and the mixed pack, which Sidney hunted two days a week. Four days a week throughout the season was now the order of the day, and wonderfully well the arrangement has worked.

At the General Election of 1900 Mr. Sanders contested East Bristol, and in 1905 fought the Bridgwater Division of Somerset, being defeated by only fourteen votes. The calls on his time thus

brought on obliged him to ask for help, and Mr. Morland Greig kindly consented to act as Deputy Master during his absence on political business. During the twelve years Mr. Sanders has been Master the fields have enormously increased, and the management of them has become increasingly difficult, since all are desperately keen to see everything, and a large proportion are visitors who are new to the game. The increase of the number of hunting days to four a week had a little effect in mitigating the crowd, since few people come out on all the four days, but at some of the popular meets, such as Hawkcombe Head, Alderman's Barrow, and Larkbarrow four hundred horses is a common number. A crowd of this size, however orderly and well intentioned, naturally needs some looking after and guidance, and on days when the Master is hunting hounds Lord Fortescue, the Chairman of the Committee, and, since the death of Sir Frederick Knight, the owner of Exmoor and Brendon, or Mr. Morland Greig, the Deputy Master, dons the pink coat and acts as Field Master.

Throughout the time Mr. Sanders has been Master sport has been consistently good, and has year by year continued to improve. Three points especially call for note. The Master has spared no trouble or expense in improving the pack, and his efforts have been crowned with success. In this he has been assisted by the careful kennel management of Sidney Tucker, who turns them out looking as they should

do. It is no easy task to bring out those big, heavy hounds looking bright and fit and lively through such a spell of tropical weather as we had in 1906.

The pace of the pack has notably improved in the last few years; they run better together and with less inclination to string. Running better together, they strike one as being rather more eager to fling their tongues, this being specially so in the mixed pack, where the presence of a few bitches has increased the music perceptibly.

The most noticeable improvement effected by Mr. Sanders has been in the obviating of those long weary waits during tufting which so frequently had to be endured in days gone by. This is due, in a great measure, to the able harbouring of Fred Goss, but is also attributable to the general quickening up of the whole of the proceedings which has been brought about by the Master, as much by example as by precept.

The good runs witnessed in the past twelve years are too numerous to be recited here, the two best being those from Hawkridge to Glenthorne in 1899 with a stag, and from Chapman's Barrows to Dunster with a hind, both given in detail elsewhere. Other noteworthy runs were from Hele Bridge to Honor Oak with a hind; from Yard Down to Silcombe, a race all the way; from Yearnor Moor to Fyledon; from the Warren to Woolhanger, and back to Bromham; from Haddon to Emmet's Grange; from Hadden to Bradleigh, by Cruwys Morchard; from

Great Wood on the Quantocks to the cliffs by Quantocks Head, along the cliffs to Lilstock, and then twelve miles across the enclosed vale by Fairfield, Stringston, and Brymore to Durleigh, near Bridgwater. Many others as good as these will be fresh in the minds of those who have hunted regularly during these happy years.

Which, it may be asked, were the best seasons? Probably 1899, 1903 a very wet year, and 1906 a very dry one.

In 1903 we had a succession of brilliant gallops over the open moor, hounds on one occasion running clean away from everyone and killing their deer by themselves; the sport in the winter with the hinds was also above the average. Good as many seasons have been, none can compare with that of 1906, which is noticeable for many reasons. The pack was never in better condition; they had thoroughly recovered from the effect of the sickness from which they suffered in 1904 and the early part of 1905, and they found the stags worthy of their efforts. In some years, for no apparent reason, stags are weak and cannot run; this was so noticeably in 1904, when they could not stand up before the pack even in its then condition; in 1906, on the contrary, not a single weak stag was met with—one or two were so overburdened with age and good living that they fell comparatively easy victims, and two were lame, but all the rest stood up before hounds with quite unusual strength, and this whether they were young

or old, whether the weather was broiling hot or wet and stormy, and whether there was a scent or whether there was not.

There was little or no scent when Mr. Sanders hunted a young stag with most exemplary patience throughout a blazing hot day—88 degrees in the shade—from Dunkery and killed him after six hours at Oare Ford; there was a first-rate scent when he ran a heavy four on top deer from Lillescombe to Emmet's Grange, and back to Cornham. All the notions we had previously acquired as to scent and as to the run of the deer were thrown to the winds. Deer faced the open moor with a boldness they had not shown for years. Wheddon Cross and Dunkery Hill Gate are not favourite meets, yet drawing Bincombe we had three first-class runs, one to Scob Hill, one to Rowbarrow Farm, near Clatworthy, on the far side of the Brendon Hills, and the third by Alderman's Barrow to Oare Ford and the Parks at Porlock. Two Haddon deer went to Tarr Steps, one to Couple Ham, and one to Bradleigh, Cruwys Morchard. We hunted two Bray Valley deer; one went to Sandiway, Cuzzicombe, Molland, and Bish Mill, the other right over the moor to Porlock village. Four deer from Yearnor Moor and Cloutsham crossed the Barle at Driver, one before Mr. Stanley's merry pack.

A Dunster deer, carrying a curious head, four on top on one side and an upright on the other, beat us by Upton. Twice Mr. Stanley ran over the same

country, once from Luxborough to Bampton Down, once from Elworthy to Duvale, both noteworthy runs. From Bradley Ham, close to Withypool, hounds ran over Winsford Hill down to Castle Bridge, down the valley to Marsh Bridge, back up the Barle and Danes Brook to Anstey Common, Lyshwell, Clogs Down, Humbers Ball, Worth Hill, and down to Bradley Ham, where they killed a few yards from where the deer had been lying when they found him.

Almost every stag found anywhere on the forest side crossed Badgworthy Water, and certainly in no season for many years past did we spend so much time between Alderman's Barrow and Sadler's Stone as in 1906. We seemed assured of sport every time hounds went out, and certainly Mr. Sanders' last season will live long in the memories of all those who saw it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CLOUTSHAM AND HADDON.

Who list by me to learn Assembly for to make
For Keyser, King, or Comely Queen, for Lord or Lady's sake,
Or where or in what sort it should prepared be,
Marke well my wordes and thank me then, for thanks I crave in fee.
GASCOIGNE.

CLOUTSHAM is the meet which is most intimately associated in the minds of most of us with stag-hunting, for here, year after year, we gather in the second week of August for the "opening meet," or "solemn assembly" as it would have been called in old days. So perfectly suited is Cloutsham for a big meet that it would be hard to think that George Gascoigne had not Cloutsham in his mind when he penned his rhymes, printed with "The Noble Art of Venerie" in 1584, did one not know that they are but a bad metrical version of the words of Edward, Duke of York, translated from Gaston de Foix. Here at Cloutsham we have the "gladsome green," the "stately trees," the "chrystalle running streams," and the cool breezes described by the poet. Here is yearly held the opening meet which, true to ancient custom, begins with a big picnic. Being in the middle of the holiday season, the seaside towns are full of

tourists who help to swell the throng, so that, although there may be several hundred horsemen and horsewomen present, their numbers are far exceeded by those who come on foot and in carriages ; the latter, when drawn up in rows, fill up a large part of the field. In fact, every wheeled vehicle within twenty miles seems to meet there, or get broken down on the way. The roads from Minehead and Exford are filled with a continuous stream of carriages, and a right weary journey they have before they reach Sir Thomas Acland's picturesque old farmhouse, which stands almost hidden by the fine old timber trees surrounding it. Standing in the meet field it is hard to realise that this is very high ground, so completely do the surrounding hills overtop it ; yet the Ordnance map proves that Cloutsham is a thousand feet above the sea, which lies sparkling in the distance ; and the heated stream of foot people who have elected to climb from the valley below by the steep path which comes up over the nose of the Ball would be quite willing to believe that another hundred might be added to that.

One gets a glimpse of the vale of Porlock, with its cornfields ripe for harvest ; admires the blaze of colour, purple heather, and golden gorse above the olive green of the ilex wood on the slope of Bossington Beacon ; but the main interest lies in the dark green combes in the foreground and on either hand, for they are the great stronghold of the deer.

" Good Heavens, you are not going to try to draw that ! " was the exclamation of an up-country sportsman who had not grasped the mysteries of harbouring and tufting, and, indeed, the task looks well-nigh hopeless, for the thick covert extends literally for miles. Yet it is drawn by tufters when a stag has been properly harboured, and with success, and stags are forced to face the open and fly for their lives over the moor when there is a good scent ; when there is none the huntsman's task is sometimes almost a hopeless one.

Cloutsham Ball, behind which, in a fold of the ground, stands the old farmhouse, is the apex of a tableland forming the space between the two arms of the letter Y. The stem, which debouches on the Porlock Vale, and the left arm are the Horner, the combe on the right is the Eastwater, and the junction is Eastwater Foot. On the right, as one looks down the valley, is the great ridge of Dunkery, which sweeps up in a huge expanse of purple heather broken by the narrow combes, Aldercombe and Hollowcombe, to a height of over seventeen hundred feet. On the left is the rounder summit of Lee Hill, separating Horner from Hawkcombe. Behind the moor rises in fold after fold of heather to the high ground by Alderman's Barrow, and behind that again the wide waste expanse of Exmoor. It is over this line that all want the stag to go.

While the crowd is assembling one may take a look at the old farmhouse. It stands on steeply sloping

ground looking across the deep Eastwater Combe, and over the towering oaks in its bottom to the purple side of Dunkery. The entrance is by a curious thatched gateway into the Court of Curtilage; on the right or north side, are the stables; the west end is filled by cattle byres, part of the south by a low wall, while the farmhouse and a cottage fill up the rest of the east end, and form a little court of their own. Almost all the windows face inwards, as do the doors, except two modern doors in the stable, and the whole place is very snug and warm, well protected against the storms of winter. In ancient times it had need, doubtless, of other protection, for it was a lawless district, and records show that bloodshed took place even in the peaceful and lovely Horner Valley. Cloutsham was a place of some importance; its owners were men of substance and position, for history tells that Richard of Cloutsham was called to Westminster as a juror, about 1250, on a lawsuit as to lands at Dulverton; he was also surety for his neighbour at Stoke Pero, in a suit with the all-powerful Reginald de Mohun, of Dunster. As one of the regarkers of the forest he was very active, not only in presenting the men of Withypool and Hawkrigde—it is wonderful how their hands were against every man, and every man's hand against them—for wastes, assarts, and other offences against the vert, but he also attached John Scrutenger, of Cloutsham, probably one of his villeins, for killing a hind at Whitsuntide.

In 1325 John of Cloutsham held a quarter of a knight's fee there of William Martyn, who held of John of Luccombe.

As one stands under the big trees watching Sidney Tucker kennelling his pack and drawing out his tulters, one can hardly help calling to mind that the seltsame thing has been done in the same way, at the same spot, for hundreds of years. Boots and breeches may have altered, coats may be better cut, the horn may be straight and not curved, saddles neater and lighter, hounds may be cleaner limbed and faster (horses probably have changed but little), but the sport is the same, and in all its essentials has changed not at all. The harbourer, as of old, has done his work and harboured his deer, he and the huntsman go forth into the depths of Honner to rouse him and get him away, and it is ours to gallop at a discreet and sober interval behind the hounds as they fly forward over the bleak hills of Somerset.

What crowds of good sportsmen have stood beside the sunk fence which bounds the meet field. Sir Thomas his Honour, the lord of the soil, who hunted the country in so princely a manner in the century before last; Parson Boyse, of Withypool, to whose hunting diary the present generation are indebted for the accounts of so many famous runs. Stag-hunter Boyse was an authority *sans appelle* in all matters relating to staghunting, and a brilliant horseman; his parish luckily did not require, as it

certainly did not receive, much of his attention, but the few old people to whom he is a tradition of their youth speak of him as of a kindly disposition, though possessing a somewhat erratic temper. Local tradition is full of tales of Boyse; all are to his credit as a staghunter, though some are not much to his credit as a parson. He was secretary to the hounds, and one ceremony he never omitted was to give out the meets for the ensuing week after the second lesson. He lived in a hard, rough time, in a peculiarly hard, rough place, and did his duty according to his lights. Peace be to his ashes.

Of a slightly later date were Parson Frowde, of Knowstone, the tales about whom go far to filling several books already, and Parson Jones, of Countisbury; the latter was a great patron of wrestling, and the straw hat and silver spoons, the prizes at the coming wrestling match, were always hung for inspection in his church the Sunday previous to a contest. It was reported of him that on the first Sunday in the staghunting season, after the congregation had sung with enthusiasm "As pants the hart" he preached an eloquent sermon from the text "Lo, we heard of the same at Ephratha, and found it in the wood."

It is not many years since "As pants the hart" was sung at the beginning of the season at nearly every church in the district, and the writer perfectly well remembers being at Stoke Pero Church one Sunday afternoon when Mr. Basset, then Master

of the hounds rode over. The clergyman gave out "Abide with me," and a wheezy harmonium struck up the tune, but they did not have the Master of the staghounds there to church every Sunday, and the congregation were not to be denied. One adventurous voice began "As pants the hart," the rest joined in, and the curate and the harmonium were utterly left.

The Rev. Jack Russell was a sportsman of a different sort from Parson Frowde and Parson Boyse. Their equal in every sport in the field, he was immeasurably their superior as a man and a clergyman. When he was promoted to a good living, only a few years before he died, the Bishop of Exeter was remonstrated with for admitting to preferment a man who had kept a pack of hounds for forty years, in defiance of his ecclesiastical superior. The Bishop's retort was, "If all the parishes in my diocese were as well worked as Mr. Russell's, I should not have all the anxiety I now have."

Where Parson Jack Russell was there was sure to be gathered together a group of the best sportsmen in the hunt—such men as the late Earls of Portsmouth and Fortescue; Sir Frederick Knight, the owner of Exmoor; Colonel Henry Sanford, one of the hardest men of his day; Mr. Whyte Melville, Mr. Granville Somerset, Mr. Froude Bellew, Mr. Sam Warren, Mr. Joshua Clark, Mr. John Joyce, and many others who have now gone from the scenes they loved so well; and though they *might* stand about and talk

and tell stories, often in the broadest dialect of Devon, their eyes and ears were thoroughly open to what was going on in the combe below. These were not the men to "get left" when hounds went away.

The General, as Mr. Bisset was commonly called, was not often seen in the meet field; his usual post of observation was on Horner Hill, near where the summer-house now stands. He hated a crowd round him, and was not long in letting them know it.

Deer are curious creatures, and there are tastes and fashions among them as among human beings. For many years almost all heavy stags lay in the thick oak scrub in Yealscombe, that is to say, in a depression on the left, or Lee Hill side, of the main valley, just below where the streams join; there is a desperately trying path up it on to Lee Hill, which is a sore trial to a blown horse. In those days we had, as a rule, a long wait ere the stag was roused and forced to fly. Then the fashionable quarter was in the combe below Stoke Pero; now, of late years, the deer are mostly found, as they used to be a hundred years ago, in the furze bushes at Sweet Tree, or in the little combes on the side of Dunkery. When a stag is harboured here, riders, taking post in the field above the farm, can readily see across the combe all that goes on, and have not, as a rule, long to wait before they hear the welcome sound of the horn as the Master or huntsman comes back for the pack.

Hounds meet a great many times in the season,

both for the stag and hind, at Cloutsham, and perhaps this somewhat dulls the appreciation of it as a really sporting meet. Yet it is second to none in the country; indeed, the recorded good runs from Cloutsham are considerably in excess of those from any other meet, but as hounds go there very often, there must necessarily be a corresponding number of bad and indifferent days, and certainly a bad day at Cloutsham is very bad indeed, worse than almost anywhere else. When deer hang about the coverts all day one is sorely tempted to leave Cloutsham Ball, and plunge into the deep combes to see what hounds are doing. It is not until a stranger has done this, and found out for himself how impossible it is to see and hear, and how easy it is in those dense woodlands to lose all touch of hounds, and until he has ridden a stout horse to a standstill in a vain attempt to find them, that he begins to appreciate at its full value the quickness and local knowledge of the hunt servants, and the condition of their horses. "When in doubt in Horner, get up on to Cloutsham Ball as quick as you can," is a maxim of universal acceptance; from there, and from there only, one commands the whole range of coverts.

Some of the greatest runs in the old days took place from Cloutsham. One of the earliest recorded took place on September 8th, 1786, when a very old stag, known as the old Badgworthy stag, was found in Hollowcombe on the side of Dunkery, and led the field away on the line so often followed by deer in

recent years to Badgworthy and Exchead, thence to Prayway and Simonsbath, passing Cornham, and over Filedon Ridge to Longwood below Yard Down. Here he was fresh found and was killed below the mines at North Molton. The deer is stated in the diary of Parson Boyse to have been twenty years old, and was known to have been a good stag in 1775. He had all his rights, with seven on the top of one horn and six on the other. A picture of the head, which is in the possession of Sir Thomas Dyke Acland, will be found in Dr. Collyns's "*Chase of the Wild Red Deer.*" This run is remarkable for the fact that hounds were stopped for two hours in the middle of the run, owing to a very severe thunderstorm.

In 1789 a good stag gave a very fast gallop from Yealscombe, in Horner, to Badgworthy, and over Brendon Common to Barberick Mill, being taken at Lilford Bridge.

On April 24th, 1849, hounds had a flying run from Sweet Tree after a hind, taking her just about Watersmeet in one hour and five minutes, a distance of somewhere about thirteen miles in a straight line. This is said to have been one of the fastest runs on record, and it is easy to believe it.

In 1891 the writer had the good fortune to accompany Miles when he harboured a good stag in the wood just below Stoke Pero Church. There were three stags lying there; the tufters acknowledged the line where one of the stags had come in

from feeding, worked right up to him, and drove him out without rousing the others. He went away upwards through Hole Wood, and broke over the hill to Chettisford Water. The pack was laid on on Poole Common, and ran well to the water just above Nutscale, and up stream to the foot of Embercombe; here a long check occurred, and while hounds were being cast up the valley towards Chettisford one of the puppies, coming on to overtake the pack, hit the line and worked very slowly upwards to Luccott Moor, but it was some distance before hounds were really able to own the scent; when they did, they ran on at a good pace, and we galloped over the wet ground to Luccott Moor, over Porlock Common to Black Barrow and on to Badgworthy. Hounds went at a good pace, but not so fast as to prevent horses keeping easily with them. The stag had not loitered in Badgworthy, but went straight on again over Lanacombe, to the Black Pits, most of the field avoiding the bad ground by going over Badgworthy Hill to Two Gates. Hounds crossed Brendon Road and made away over Black Pits towards Farley Water, and fresh found the stag as he was soiling in one of the deep peat holes. From here he ran the whole length of the Chains, bringing many riders to the ground, and passing Pinkworthy Pond, went on by Wood Barrow and Longstone. By this time the field was strung out in long drawn file, and the moor was dotted for miles with horses not able to get any further.

Longstone Bog stopped many blown horses, and beyond that point there were very few riders with hounds as they went down over the enclosed country to Parracombe, where the deer was halloed down the stream. From here it was a race down the water to Folley Wood, close above Heddonsmouth, in the parish of Trentishoe, where the stag stood to bay and was killed. This is certainly one of the best runs which has been seen from Cloutsham in modern times, and is fully equal to almost any of the runs recorded in history. Very few were in at the death, and many failed to get home. Martinhoe, Combe Martin, and Lynton were full of dead-beat horses, more than one of which died in the night.

The first and last days of the staghunting season of 1905 produced runs of more than ordinary merit. The opening day was a poor one for foot and carriage people; it rained as it only can rain in and around Exmoor. Two stags went away from Sweet Tree after hounds had been drawing a short time; what they were it was hard to say, for an extra heavy storm was sweeping over the moor at the moment. Probably the pack, which was brought on at once, settled on the line of the smaller deer; but be this as it may, they rattled over the hill as if for Codsand, swung round right-handed, and ran as hard as ever they could drive to Oare Vicarage; about an eight-mile point without a check all the way. Here hounds lost the deer, which beat them by lying down

in standing corn. A well-known sportsman from the Midlands said it was the best gallop he had had with this pack in fifteen seasons ; it certainly was a flying pace the whole way.

On the last day of the season hounds ran from Langcombe Head without a check over Luccott Moor to the Shilletts, down Hawkcombe and up to Luccott Farm, and down by Poole Bridge into Horner ; a big ring with no check all the way. Here the deer had soiled, but the ubiquitous Fred Goss viewed him ; then hounds ran very fast up the combe and through Whitbarrow Wood across Hawkcombe to the Parks, right through the Porlock coverts. Here they completely beat nine-tenths of the field, and broke away by Pitt Combe and Weare Wood Common to Robber's Bridge ; then they slanted up the hill, and went over North Common and by Deddy Combe nearly down to Oare, whence the stag turned away up hill again, and, crossing the ridge, came down to the beach between Rodney and the lighthouse. After soiling he landed again, and once more faced the hill, climbing to the summit of Countisbury. Here Sidney, who for some miles had been absolutely alone, was joined by the Master and whip and some more hounds, and they ran down to the Brendon Water and up stream to Millslade, whence the stag broke back, and climbing the hill yet again, crossed Countisbury Common, and went to sea close to the Foreland, where the coastguard's boat secured him just as the dark of an October evening closed down,

leaving the Master and his men a weary ride home on a very bad road to Exford.

HADDON.

Second only to Cloutsham as a stronghold of the deer is the big collection of thick woodlands, extending over some thousands of acres, to which most people apply the general term Haddon.

The brown, heathery ridge of Haddon Hill is a prominent landmark from any part of the district; almost surrounded by deep valleys clothed with the densest and most impenetrable oak scrub, and watered by the dashing stream of the Haddeo, a tributary of the Exe, it has from the earliest been the favourite refuge for the deer when other and smaller coverts were disturbed and unsafe. So much was this the case that there were always said to be two herds of deer, the forest herd and the Haddon herd.

The road through the Haddeo Valley is a private one, and, save for one cottage at Clammer and the few cottages at Hartford Cleeve, there is nothing whatever to disturb the quietude of the valley from end to end, and it is small wonder that the deer have made it their headquarters on the south-east side of the district. Beyond Haddon to the eastward are large coverts at Bittescombe, belonging to Sir John Ferguson Davie, through which deer constantly pass and repass, but they do not very frequently lie there. Further to the eastward again are the big plantations between Huish Champflower

and the river Tone near Chipstable. These are much frequented by the deer as they contain a vast amount of thick bracken, most favourite covert for stags and most difficult to dislodge them from. All these woods are, however, subsidiary to Haddon, and deer found in them, in nine cases out of ten, betake themselves to Haddon before going away elsewhere. So much is the deep Haddeo Valley the headquarters of this side of the country, that it is probable that most of the deer in the Huntsham and Stoodley coverts, far down the Exe Valley, spend some portion of every year at Haddon.

Every part of these coverts has its own special name, but there are only two of interest. The drive which extends the whole length of the valley is called Lady Harriet's Drive, to commemorate the heroism and sufferings of Lady Harriet Acland in nursing and rescuing her husband, Colonel Acland, who was sick and a prisoner in the hands of the French during the war in America.

The other name is "Lousy Gate," which is a place on the high road close to the upper lodge gate of Baronsdown. It had been known from time immemorial as "Lousy Gate," frequently pronounced Loosy, but the name was an offence to some of the ultra-refined, and it was suggested that it must have been intended for "Lucy." This was improved upon by some really clever person, who, seeing there was a Lady Harriet's Drive, jumped to the conclusion that Lousy Gate must be a corruption of "Lady

Louisa Gate." Such it was sometimes called, and the name has actually appeared in print, but was too ridiculous for acceptance, so the dreadful point was avoided by calling the place "Higher Lodge, Baronsdown." This is veritably a case of "Much ado about nothing." A pig's louse, or loose, is good old West-country English for a pig's sty or enclosure, more particularly the enclosure to which the herds of swine were driven at night from feeding. As such the word is frequently met with in old documents and deeds, and is common in the district. The names Loosehall Wood and Lousy Thorn will occur at once to every staghunter. The particular louse, or enclosure, which gave its name to Lousy Gate was that to which the swine were driven at night which roamed in search of acorns and beech-mast, in exercise of the right of "pannage," in "Swinescleeve," at the upper side of which Lousy Gate is situated.

Hounds meet at Haddon a great many times in the course of the season, for it is a sure find, and, indeed, so large has been the herd of late years that Mr. Ian Amory has had many "invitation" days there during the hindhunting season, and has enjoyed some excellent runs.

Haddon is, however, far from being a popular meet—except for the carriage people; for them it is a perfect paradise. It is approached by fair roads, and Haddon deer show a marked predilection for running through the coverts in and near the Exe

Valley, all of which are commanded by a most excellent driving road from which everything can be seen; so when the deer takes to the Exe Valley, the field consists mainly of a surging crowd of carriages and motor-cars, most of the riders, except the few who have learned how to get along the Exe Valley without going on the road, having abandoned as hopeless all attempt to see hounds.

Though the carriages and motors are without doubt one of the main causes of the unpopularity of Haddon, it is only fair to say that, though they may spoil the fun of the riders, they do not as a rule interfere with the hounds or with the run of the deer, for, being in the valley, the top side of the covert is always open for deer to break away towards the better country, and they frequently do so; and then the horsemen who have faced the dust and the crowd to keep near hounds reap their reward.

The Haddon coverts are entirely surrounded by enclosed country, and it is only naturally to be expected that deer, bred and born in such a district, should show a greater tendency to run the coverts than do their cousins, whose nightly wanderings lead them over wide expanses of open moorland, and whichever way a deer may make up his mind to go, the field has of necessity to cross some few miles of enclosed ground, going from gate to gate, and from road to lane, ere horsemen find themselves on any open ground such as Court Down or the heather above Red Cleeve.

Still, when one comes to look back over the records of sport, one is driven to admit that Haddon deer are stout and strong, and that many a long hunting run and not a few brilliant gallops have resulted from rousing a stag beside the Haddeo. In old days Haddon stags continually ran to Slowley and *vice versa*, and now that the iron works on Brendon and the mineral railway are abandoned, they are beginning to travel this line again; most of the land is now enclosed and one has to go gate hunting, but none the less a very pretty hunting run may be seen over this line.

The general run of Haddon deer is by Baron's Down to the Exe Valley, and if hounds are lucky enough to force their deer away towards the Barle, a capital gallop over the heather is the result; especially is this likely to happen late in the season, when the deer, which earlier in the year have lain in the upper part of the Barle, have congregated in Haddon, as their custom is, in October. Then when there is a meet at Haddon the villagers at Withypool, twelve miles off, are always on the look-out to see the field galloping hard over Bradley Ham towards the Barle. At Haddon, more often, perhaps, than at any other covert, it is the unexpected that happens, and deer have been killed at the Castle of Comfort, Nether Stowey, after going by Slowley and Donniford; at Woolston Moor; at Bathealton, near Cruwys Morchard; at Withleigh Mill; at Halberton; twice at Emmet's Grange; at Flexborough; at Orchard

Corner, and at Bossington. In fact, there is hardly a place within a radius of twenty miles to which or through which a Haddon deer has not led hounds in recent years.

Mr. Bissett had a curious experience at Haddon when he killed his first big deer there in 1855. They found in Huscombe Wood and ran by Aller's Wood and Combe nearly to Anstey, and then took a wide sweep round the enclosed country by Spurway Mill, Highleigh, and Combeshead, back to Haddon, where the old stag beat them in the water, but they fresh found him by Hartford and ran him in the dark up and down the water. They could only tell where he was when hounds were at fault by the splashing in the water, and they could do nothing without a light; so Mr. Froude Bellew volunteered to ride down to a cottage and borrow a lantern, but the old woman did not know him, and, as he had no money with him, declined the loan of a candle, though she eventually consented on his leaving his hunting-knife as a pledge for its safe return.

There are few places where the habits of the deer can be observed better than at Haddon, and it is here that successive harbourers, from Jem Blackmore, the elder, to Fred Goss, have studied their calling, some of them learning much from old Jack Wensley, the woodman at Hartford, who has lived among the deer and studied them all his life.

Some years ago there was a stag in Haddon lame in the stifle joint, sometimes it affected him, sometimes

he appeared to go quite sound. During hind hunting he was seen, in company with five other stags, to cross from Wynne Corner towards Haddon Farm, but he could not get over the big bank, and fell back, whereupon two of the stags came back and, crossing their antlers behind him, shoved him up on to the bank, and the herd all went away together. It was at Haddon, too, that a stag, hard pressed by the hounds, found a fresh deer lying in the heather, and tried to turn him out, a liberty which the latter resented, and the two engaged in mortal combat till the hounds were almost on them.



"Down over" to Badgworthy Water.

CHAPTER XIX.

RIDING ON EXMOOR.

"Here's to the horse,
And his rider, too, of course."

WHYTE-MELVILLE.

THERE was at one time an idea very prevalent that it was necessary to have a local bred horse, and to ride him in some special way in order to see the big runs on Exmoor. Both ideas are utter fallacies ; a good horse and a good rider will find their way into the first flight on Exmoor as surely as they will do so in any other country, and a bad rider will be left behind, whether on a good horse or a bad one, in just the same way as elsewhere. This is very far from saying that the local rider who understands the game, and knows the moor, and is used to riding over the class of rough ground to be met with on Exmoor, has not an immense advantage over a stranger, but the stranger, if a real horseman, will be the first to see this and act accordingly.

To take the case of horses first—it has frequently been said that one must have an animal that has run on the moor and knows a bog when it sees one. A glance at the animals which run on the moor is

sufficient to tell anyone that for a middle-weight to hope to be with the present pack in even a moderate gallop would be absurd. The pure bred Exmoor pony is probably the most marvellous animal of his inches in existence, and we have all seen small animals of twelve hands and less, carrying weights up to even fourteen stone, scrambling up and down steep places with apparent ease, and galloping over rough ground at an astonishing pace, but this has always been when hounds have been dodging about among the hills from covert to covert; when hounds run really fast for any length of time over the open moor, an Exmoor pony, if burdened with more than a feather-weight, is bound to be left behind.

The real value of the Exmoor pony is as a stock to breed from, and a well shaped horse, about fifteen hands to fifteen two, with three strains of thoroughbred and one strain Exmoor pony, will gallop and stay against anything in the world, with a moderate weight. If you are fortunate enough to find one which, to the Exmoor pony and the thoroughbred adds a strain of the old Devonshire pack-horse—now, alas! almost extinct—you may ask it to carry a welter-weight at any sort of pace, over any sort of ground, and you will not be disappointed; but horses so bred are very few and far between, and the lucky owners are not easily tempted to part with them. There are a considerable number of small, smart horses bred in the district from the farmers' mares, many, if not most, of which contain a strong infusion of pony

blood. The heavy Shire blood has hardly infected the hill districts at present, and the Suffolk is absolutely unknown. The working stock on most of the hill farms are small, short legged, strong backed, quick moving horses, which can both trot and gallop. A heavy, slow moving horse is quite useless on a farm, half the acreage of which is as steep as the side of a house, and on many of which the sled is still in use for carrying crops. These horses are habitually ridden over the moors and wide commons shepherding, and are quite used to doing a day's hunting when required. The writer remembers seeing Sam Webber, of Brightworthy, and his son leading the field for the last three miles of a big gallop on the horses they had unhitched from the cart in which they were carrying corn when hounds came in sight.

This class of mare is a very useful basis to breed from when crossed with suitable thoroughbred sires. For many years there has been in the district an abundance of good blood, such as Tomahawk, First Flight, Half and Half, Messenger, Progress, who was own brother to the celebrated mare Florence, and was the sire of innumerable polo ponies; Button Park, Allow Me, Upset, The Cob, Orme's Head, The Ghost, Grand National, and others too numerous to mention. There are, it must be admitted, considerable numbers of useful staghunters bred in the district, and the best of them are, beyond a doubt, the very best mounts for a medium weight to ride, but the supply is nothing

approaching to the demand. The Devon and Somerset hunt four days a week, and the field averages two hundred to two hundred and fifty, and is sometimes as many as four hundred, besides which Sir John Amory's and Mr. Stanley's staghounds, and several packs of foxhounds and harriers hunt the district. In the height of the season there cannot be far short of eight hundred hunters and ponies standing in the neighbourhood, a number far beyond the power of the district to produce.

The visitor must, therefore, rest content with getting a suitable kind of horse, and the question is, what kind is suitable? This is mainly a question of weight. There being no jumping, size is not required for a light or medium weight; what are essential are blood, a good back and loins, and a good shoulder, the latter being in the nature of a luxury. Without a strong back and loins you cannot possibly get up a hill, but you can get down a hill with a very indifferent shoulder and some risk of a fall. A good polo pony is a first-rate mount for a feather-weight, and probably the best description of the sort of mount for a light-weight would be an animal which would make a first-rate polo pony were it two inches smaller. Big horses are not as a rule desirable, as they are not so handy in steep places and along narrow paths; most big horses seem to have enough to do to carry themselves up a steep hill, without being burdened with a rider. It is, however, fair to say that we seldom see a good big one with these hounds. We

see plenty of first-class light-weight horses, but a high-class heavy-weight horse is rare, and cannot be expected from the dealers who let out for hire. No dealer could afford to give the price for a really first-rate fifteen stone horse and let him out at two guineas a day.

What really good big horses can do was shown by men like the late Mr. Granville Somerset, and, above all, Mr. Bissett, who could gallop when required over the moor against any man, in spite of his weight of twenty stone, but he gave immense prices for his horses. Mr. Froude Hancock, who is bad to beat, however fast hounds run, is an example of what comparatively small horses, chosen with consummate judgment and in the very pink of condition, are capable of under a welter-weight when ridden with judgment and knowledge. When all is said and done, the only indispensable quality is "blood"; the better it is and the more of it the better.

Many a good performer both on the flat and across country has proved itself a safe and pleasant mount with the staghounds. That well-known sprinter, Little Red Rat, is as much at home on the wet ground on the North Forest as on Newmarket Heath, and shows himself as capable of skating and sliding down a rocky path, with a river at the bottom, as he is of standing like a rock on the Limekilns to allow his owner to watch an important trial of two-year-olds.

Next to blood the most essential thing is condition.

No horse that is not perfectly in condition can stand the work with the Devon and Somerset. To the real hunting man who takes an interest in his stables no work of warning is needful. But a great many strangers bring their horses down under the impression that it is "only stag hunting," not real work, and a nice easy preparation for the fox-hunting season. Filled legs, curbs, and sore backs are the inevitable result. No stud-groom who has not had experience of the hunting on Exmoor ever takes it seriously, added to which they hate getting a horse fit in the summer, when they consider they are entitled to an easy time. Muscles and sinews not properly hardened up are sure to be the worse for wear after being pushed along up hill and over deep ground, and long galloping when the stomach is burdened with internal fat is an undue strain both on heart and wind. A back not rendered saddle hard by continued work is certain to become galled simply by the friction and pressure of the saddle on a long day in hot weather, in addition to which a horse only half in condition is sure to develop humour, which will work out where the skin is weakened by pressure and friction.

Dressings of tannin and alum and such like contrivances have been tried and are of some use, but nothing on earth will prevent a soft horse getting a sore back if he gets a really hard day's hunting in hot weather.

This is not the place to discourse on the means of

getting a horse into condition, but a few hints drawn from many years' experience may be useful. Always see that a groom when exercising two horses has saddles on both and rides them alternately. If a horse is intended for a lady to hunt it should be exercised and ridden in a side-saddle. A side-saddle is bigger than a man's and the sight of a lady's horse sore all round the edge of the saddle and sound in the middle, due solely to the want of this precaution, is not uncommon.

It is a good thing to keep the saddle off a horse the day after hunting, and have its necessary exercise done in hand, as it gives the skin a chance to recover itself from any slight irritation which may exist even though not apparent. With a linen-lined saddle it is a good thing to pipeclay at once on taking off the saddle; the clay as it dries absorbs all the grease from the sweat, and when dry and brushed off leaves the linen clean. Pipeclaying after the sweat has dried is no use except for ornamentation.

The most difficult thing to guard against in hot weather is an attack of "surfeit"—urticaria or nettlerash—due to over-heating of the blood. The only way to avoid this is by very careful feeding; stimulating food, such as beans, peas, and maize, should be entirely avoided, and an extra allowance of green stuff given as well as carrots; but no matter how much care is taken some horses will develop it if worked in hot weather. With such, half an ounce to an ounce of bi-carbonate of soda with the night's

feed is a good thing, as it acts directly on the mucous membrane and skin. As a cure the simplest thing is to sponge over the places with a mild disinfectant, such as Condyl's Fluid, and give three or four ounces of Epsom salts in a mash, and some bi-carbonate of soda with the feed.

Any compactly built, active, well-bred horse in condition will soon learn to cross Exmoor as cleverly as a native, particularly if he is walked at exercise over deep heather, and among stones, and allowed to put his feet into a turf pit and a soft place or two, and find out for himself how unpleasant, but how easily avoided they are, when he is not flurried or excited. A week's exercise ought to be sufficient schooling for any horse except one taken straight out of training on the flat; they have been so long accustomed and encouraged to go close to the ground that they take a longer period of hack riding before they can be trusted to pick their feet up when asked to go along.

There is no real difference in principle between riding to staghounds on Exmoor and riding to any other hounds elsewhere. Every good rider will wish to be "with them" as near as he can, and a resolute man properly mounted will rarely fail, but there are a few points to remember in which hunting on Exmoor differs in practice from other hunting. No one can hope to keep for long as close to hounds as it would be his aim to do in a grass country. Hounds cross the combes where the deer go, and many combes

can only be crossed by a horse at speed at certain points where there are paths and well recognised crossings. To try to take a horse across some of the deep, awkward combes wherever hounds might happen to go would inevitably either stop the horse from exhaustion, or lose so much time that the rider would most probably never see hounds again. To entrust oneself absolutely to a pilot is to surrender half the interest in hunting, but a stranger, riding generally according to his own judgment, need not scorn local guidance over an intricate crossing, or through a wood, or even over a bit of deep ground. There are always plenty of riders out who know the moor, and are capable of going as hard as any man in reason can desire. A stranger will always be wise to get someone to point out to him a few of the men who can be depended upon to be in the first flight, and afterwards, if he see these men, and particularly the hunt servants, avoiding a bit of ground which apparently lies in the direct route, he will be wise in following them : they know what they are doing and they do not go out of the way without a reason for doing so.

A good many strangers, distrustful of their own judgment, very wisely rely entirely on following some well-known member of the hunt. To some of these a word of warning may possibly be useful.

They should remember that the pilot they have chosen comes out to enjoy his own day's hunting, and not for the purpose of piloting people of whom

he knows nothing, so they should not follow him in such a way as to destroy his enjoyment, which they may very easily and quite unwittingly do. It is hardly necessary to suggest that the pilot should be given room to fall without being ridden over. But beyond this he should be given room to pull up suddenly, or alter his course without being bumped into. It is worse to ride close to the leading horse's flank than it is to ride stride for stride behind him, for if the leading horse has to be pulled out suddenly to avoid a hole a collision is inevitable. It is no uncommon thing to see some of those who have suffered most severely from being unfairly ridden after, plunging down the steepest places, or galloping over the worst ground they can find in the endeavour, frequently successful, to shake off their following. More than one rider, whose popularity as a pilot has become more than he could bear, has been driven to ride straight home, losing the run altogether.

These, however, are extreme cases, but there are one or two ways in which thoughtless riders may interfere with their pilot, and consequently with themselves, which may probably appeal to them more directly. In woodlands this is especially so, and when hounds are out of sight. The pilot may pull up to listen for hounds, when he frequently is immediately surrounded by his following, who begin to chatter loudly. In vain he may move on again and again trying to listen; all he can hear is a

discussion as to the demerits of some other lady's habit, or the vagaries of the speaker's motor-car.

Given room, and given a chance to see and hear where hounds are, and what they are doing—in short, to do on behalf of his followers what they distrust their own power of doing for themselves, and none of the many good local sportsmen will for an instant grudge the assistance he may be able to give the stranger.

It is no easy matter to keep hounds in sight on the open moor when they run hard, and the only way to do so is to follow the old rule and get down to the bottom of every combe as quickly as the hounds, for they are sure to beat any horse going up the other side.

The pull the local man has over the stranger is that when they have climbed to the surface of the moor again the former knows pretty nearly where hounds should be, while the stranger has to search the whole expanse of moorland and may easily miss seeing them. There is no place like Exmoor for learning in a practical way how very small a fold in the ground will hide deer and hounds and riders from view. There is always, however, this consolation for the stranger: the staghounds rarely kill a stag under an hour, while the majority of the runs last nearer two, and sometimes extend to five or six hours; so that a mistake, however bad, is not necessarily fatal, as it is in a racing-pace gallop of thirty minutes over a grass country. Even if hounds

are running best pace they rarely run more than five or six miles without making such a change of direction as will enable an observant rider, who may be two miles or more behind, to pick up.

This may seem a somewhat exaggerated statement, but in the crowded part of the season, when hounds run really fast over the open, the tail of the field is frequently two miles behind the pack.

A pair of field-glasses assist one materially, and those collapsible glasses which go in the pocket are quite good enough to enable anyone to see what hounds are doing up to two or three miles off.

Terrible tales are sometimes told of the fathomless bogs on Exmoor. These tales are frightfully exaggerated; there are no fathomless bogs on Exmoor, though there are a number of places which are very soft, and will in a wet season give much trouble if a horse gets into them. The greater portion of the moor is a peaty deposit over a hard bed of stone, the depth of the peat varying from 1ft. to 3ft., the latter depth occurring only at one or two well-known spots, and there are a few places where the action of springs has caused holes in the rocky bed, and a corresponding thickness of the peaty covering. When the layer of peat is thoroughly saturated with water the deeper portions require care to ride over, because the ease with which they can be traversed depends mainly on the consistency of the surface, which in its turn depends largely on the interlacing and matting together of the roots of the

herbage which grows on it, generally long sedgy grass, so that when a horse puts his foot on a place where the surface is weak the foot may sink in. If going at a moderate pace, and well in hand he probably gets off with a scramble; if going fast he comes down. It is when a horse flounders into a fair-sized soft place, and gets his hindquarters in, that he may be said to be bogged. He then instinctively, after a struggle or two, sits down, so that the weight of his body is upheld, or partly so, by the surface. In this position he may appear to have sunk to a great depth, but if he is allowed a moment to catch his wind and recover his nerve, and is then gently stimulated to farther exertion, he will generally struggle out with surprising ease.

Most of the ground is liberally intersected with drainage ditches which have been cut right through to the rock; these show the thickness of the peaty deposit; there are but few of them that cannot be measured with an ordinary hunting crop. The places which are most to be avoided are close beside some of the small streams where the action of water has made deep holes, and out of some of these a horse might have difficulty in getting without assistance; but all these places are pretty obvious and there is no need to get into them.

The Chains is a much-dreaded tract of wet ground from which drain out the rivers Exe, Barle, Bray, and Lynn, besides many smaller waters. It is the highest ground on Exmoor, and the wettest and foggiest.

It is in extent about a mile long and half a mile wide, and it is rarely dry enough to bear a horse and his rider, though it can generally be crossed by getting down and leading in places. The depth of peat is here from 2ft. to 3ft., and it is obvious that if it is so sodden that the surface will not carry the weight, a horse cannot go plunging for an indefinite distance through 2ft. of black, sticky slime. In fact, if a horse's feet actually sink in 1ft., a very few strides will bring him to a standstill. Unless in exceptional years, like 1906, when the whole moor was baked as hard as a brick, no one attempts to take a horse across the Chains, for the simple reason that it is quicker to go round. All the really bad places are thoroughly well known, and if a stranger sees none of the local riders venturing he had better follow their example.

On heather anyone can ride anywhere, as it is always sound, but on the long sedgy grass care must be taken, particularly in avoiding the drainage gutters, which, being half hidden by the long grass, are veritable traps for the unwary. On Exmoor, even more than in most places, it is essential to keep a horse together in all his paces, because it may be necessary to check his speed, or to turn and twist round rocks or holes at almost every stride. One good old Exmoor maxim should always be adhered to, namely, to take a pull at one's horse when the colour of the ground changes as, for instance, from heather to grass, or from green rough grass to grass

with a reddish tinge in it. This coloured grass always grows on more or less soft ground, but it can generally be crossed all right. The only real danger-flags are the white tufts of cotton grass, which are only to be found on ground which should be carefully avoided. In a good many parts of the moor turf has been dug for fuel from early times, and a half-filled old turf hole is a very nasty thing to ride into; it is generally filled with the blackest of black slime, and a horse is likely to fall in one; but it must not be forgotten that the hard underlying rock is there just the same, and there are few, if any, of them that a horse cannot flounder through, though it will be much to the detriment of smart brown boots and breeches. Anyone with the usual allowance of common sense can ride quite safely anywhere on Exmoor at a slow pace. The only difficulty is when the moor has to be crossed at top speed, and then empty saddles are fairly numerous, and riders go home with tales of their adventures which, after dinner, grow to magnificent proportions in the smoking-room.

There is only one fixed rule about dress with the Devon and Somerset staghounds, and that is against the wearing of pink, which is reserved for the Master, Secretary, and hunt servants. This used not to be the case, and at one time from a dozen to a score of pink coats were to be seen at every meet, but the numbers dwindled till only three or four regular members of the hunt were so attired. Where it is necessary for

the whip or Master to take different sides of a combe, either in a run or when tufting, they are often a mile or more apart, and the huntsman may be quite as far from both of them. It is an enormous assistance to all of them to be able to recognise and signal to each other, but as long as there were other pink coats in the field this was impossible. When the numbers dropped to half a dozen it was an easy matter to secure that they should be worn no longer, which was regretted by few, for although the regular *habitués* came to the meet properly turned out, some of the "pinks" that put in an appearance were curious spectacles. One stout old gentleman caused great joy to a numerous and rather bored field at Triscombe Stone many years ago by coming attired in a red coat, a fancy knitted waistcoat, an immense blue stock, bottle green breeches, and mahogany tops, the whole surmounted by a Jack Spragon flat hat. Though few, if any, regretted the disappearance of the pink coats, one often meets with expressions of regret that there is no recognised hunt uniform to distinguish the regular members of the hunt from the casual visitors. The subject has often been discussed, but the great hat question has been found insoluble. A tall hat is quite impossible, no one would wear it, and a hunting cap is not the most comfortable thing on a scorching hot day. Mr. Bisset never wore one, but wore a curious, soft velvet hat of his own design. Mr. Basset and Mr. Arthur Locke, his secretary, wore ordinary felt hats. These

have their advantages, and probably an acceptable pattern could be selected which would meet the case. At present everyone pleases himself, save that the cloth cap is left for the use of small boys. White linen coats are frequently worn both by men and ladies, and are very comfortable in hot weather if one can ensure getting home early. It is never safe to wear very thin clothes on Exmoor, however hot the weather may be, for the moment the sun goes down the temperature on the open moor falls with extraordinary rapidity, and a cold breeze springs up which may chill the too lightly-clad rider to the bone.

A yearly increasing number of ladies, and nearly all the small girls on ponies, ride on cross saddles, and those that do so are loud in praise of the comfort and convenience resulting. The advantages to those who find they can comfortably ride in this way are obvious; a cross-saddle only costs about half the price of a side-saddle; a lady can use the saddle belonging to the horse, whereas it was always necessary to make elaborate arrangements to ensure that the lady's own saddle should fit the horse, it being as essential for the avoidance of sore backs that the saddle should fit the lady as that it should fit the horse; but, above all, in a country like West Somerset, where many of the gates are awkward to open, facility in mounting and dismounting is a matter of first-class importance.

Falls are pretty frequent, especially in the tail of the field, but Exmoor is soft, and any serious damage

is of very rare occurrence, but in case a horse does fall it is well for the rider, if he has let go of his reins, to lose no time in getting hold of them again. Exmoor is a large place in which to catch a loose horse.

To get lost on Exmoor in daylight is next to impossible except in a fog, but now that there are plenty of accurate pocket-maps, it is a wise precaution for a stranger to carry one, always bearing in mind that all maps are positively misleading unless the points of the compass are known. A rough and ready way to fix the South when the sun is shining is to point the hour hand of a watch to the sun—half-way between that and twelve o'clock is South. In a fog, or at night, little can be done but to go on till a stream is reached and then follow it downwards. Water always runs to civilisation eventually. It is worth remembering, even in a light mist, that it is essential when in doubt to know the direction one has come in. If on foot lay a stick down or make two marks, if on horseback, keep the horse steady and turn in the saddle to look about. If the direction in which one has come is lost, the last basis is gone upon which one can decide in which direction to go, and this is how most people lose their way.

Crossing the moor at night is not as a rule difficult in the summer; horses can see better than their riders think, and it is seldom that there is no light. During hind hunting in the winter, when it is sometimes absolutely dark, it is far otherwise, but it is

surprising with what confidence Master and men ride across it going home with hounds. The stranger, whether in summer or winter, is better on the road after dark, for Exmoor is a very nasty place on which to spend the night.

“Now I pray unto every creature that hath heard or read this little treatise, of whatever estate or condition he be, that where there is too little of good language, that they of their benignity and grace will add more, and there where there is too much superfluity they will also abridge it as may seem best by their good and wise discretion. Not presuming that I had over much knowledge and ability to put into writing this royal disportful and noble game of hunting so effectually that it might not be submitted to the correction of all gentle hunters. And in my simple manner as best I could, and as might be learned of old and many diverse gentle hunters, I did my business in this rude manner to put the craft and the terms, and the exercise of this said game more in remembrance of all lords ladies gentlemen and women according to the customs and manners used in the high noble Court of this Realm of England.”

“The Master of Game.”

(Shirley MS.).

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